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Chinese Immigrant Parents, Their Children's Language Learning, and Parent-Child Relationships

By

Sudan Yao

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Education
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2020

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Chinese Immigrant Parents, Their Children's Language Learning, and Parent-Child Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Children's multilingual education is a topic of vital concern among immigrant parents, and this topic has been addressed in different cultural contexts, such as European and North American. However, there is limited research focusing on the subject among Chinese immigrants in Canada. Therefore, the current study explores Chinese immigrant parents' perceptions of their children's language learning in a Canadian trilingual setting. This qualitative research utilizes the case study approach as its research method and semi-structured interviews as the instrument to collect information from research participants. Based on the data collected from eight Chinese immigrant parents with a total of 13 children, the findings demonstrate that the Chinese immigrant parents were actively engaged in their children's language learning and that they held diverse and complex attitudes towards children's learning of different languages. In response to the challenges the Chinese children encountered in their language learning, the parents took active and positive actions to help their children overcome the difficulties associated with language learning and cultural adjustment. The findings also reveal that the diverging proficiencies in different languages between children and parents did not impede the quality of parent-child communication and familial relationships.

Keywords: language learning, parental language attitudes, parent-child relationship, Chinese immigrant parents

DEDICATION

To my husband

To my lovely boys

To myself

To everyone who is fighting a chronic pain

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Lastly, I proudly express my deepest gratitude to my dearest husband Weiheng Ju, who has continuously supported me as I chase my dreams. I would also like to thank my everyday inspiration and the power of my life – my two wonderful boys, Quentin and Francis. After diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis in the autumn of 2019, I've been living with consistent chronic pain every day. Without the understanding and caring my family give me, I would not have been able to go so far as this.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

According to Statistics Canada (2019b), Canada's population of native Chinese language speakers rose 17.4% between 2011 and 2016. The two prominent Chinese dialects, Mandarin and Cantonese, are the most common ones spoken in Chinese Canadian homes. In 2016, over 600,000 Canadians spoke Mandarin at home, and another 594,030 people spoke Cantonese (Statistics Canada, 2019b). Parents of Chinese immigrant families want their children to learn and maintain fluency in their native language to facilitate communication within their ethnic group and preserve their cultural heritage (Chhuon, 2011; Lao, 2004; Law, 2014). Meanwhile, although children from this immigrant population have a different language background, they are expected by their parents and teachers to perform at the same level as their local classmates. To this end it is critical that they become fluent in at least one of Canada's official languages: English or French. Many Chinese immigrant parents recognize the importance and support the development of English and/or French language skills in their children. As a result, these immigrant children often encounter challenges when trying to navigate the linguistic expectations of their family, peers and teachers. This creates linguistic diversity and potential conflict within Chinese immigrant families, which can influence familial relationships (Ho, 2014; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). In this context, parents have a significant influence on their child's language learning. Parents decide whether their child goes to French language school or English language school and thus influence their children's language development and acculturation process. In addition, parental attitudes toward language may also have a significant influence on the quality of family communication and intra-family relationships. Therefore, it is important to understand

Chinese immigrant parents' attitudes toward their children's language learning and how the parental attitudes affect intra-family relationships.

Background of the Study

Parental involvement plays an important role in immigrant children's integration into the new country of residence because the family is the major socializing influence on young children in their process of acculturation and adaptation. Children's interaction with their parents can be seen as a basic practice of enculturation, and family can be seen as a fundamental form of cultural institution in a given society (Li, 2009). For the purpose of the current study, it is critical to understand the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of parenting among Chinese immigrant families and the ways in which they are influenced by acculturation.

Parenting in Chinese Immigrant Families

As a result of Confucian influences, many Chinese parents expect their children to devote themselves to the pursuit of academic and professional success. Chinese parents are known for imposing disciplinary measures on their children and having high expectations for their children's academic performance and achievements. The parents' high expectations and aspirations have proven to be positively associated with their children's academic achievements and the development of multi/bilingualism (Ladky & Peterson, 2008; Riches & Curdt-Christiansen, 2010). However, the adult-centric parenting approach in many Chinese families creates a dilemma for Chinese children due to the pressure placed on them to fulfill parental expectations and their own increasing demand for autonomy. Such encounters significantly influence Chinese immigrant children's adaptation and integration into the Canadian mainstream society.

Most Chinese parents recognize that education is a means to securing social capital, but few of them fully understand their children's needs during the process of acculturation and adaptation. They endeavour to relate their life activities in the new country of residence to the cultures and values of their home country and impart the importance of industriousness and perseverance to their children (Riches & Curdt-Christiansen, 2010). However, with regard to the social and cultural conflicts that children may experience during the integration process, Chinese parents often find themselves in a state of uncertainty. Li (2009) conducted a multiple-case study that examined the salient home and school experiences of Chinese immigrant youth in the personal, relational, and larger sociocultural context. His findings suggest that Chinese immigrant adolescents struggle to keep pace with parents' high expectations and experience unpleasant encounters both within the family and at school. The experience of adapting to the host culture not only affects parents' beliefs and perceptions of the style of education, but also generates an acculturative gap between Chinese immigrant parents and their children. Ho (2014) suggests that this is because children generally adapt to the host culture more rapidly than their parents. These acculturation discrepancies can hinder parent-child relationships and inhibit children's developmental outcomes (Crane et al., 2005; Ho, 2014). The study conducted by Crane et al. (2005) further demonstrates the positive correlations between the acculturation discrepancies and adolescent depression and delinquency.

Changes in Parenting Styles in the Context of Acculturation

Maintaining heritage parenting values while resettling in a new country can be challenging for immigrant parents. In this context, Chinese immigrant parents perceive

social and cultural differences between the two cultures and adjust their style of parenting in order to ease their children's acculturation and adaptation. This phenomenon has motivated many scholars to uncover the process of children acculturation and adaptation from the perspective of parenting skills and family support (Cheah et al., 2013; Ho, 2014; Liu et al., 2017). For example, Cheah et al. (2013) report that the Chinese immigrant mothers who participated in their study recognized the cultural differences between Chinese and American parenting styles and endeavoured to find a balance between their children's autonomy and family cohesion. The changes in the mothers' parenting styles had three key features: less reliance on harsh discipline, an increase in reasonable regulations, and a focus on promoting children's overall development rather than putting exclusive emphasis on children's academic performance (Cheah et al., 2013). In a more recent study, Liu et al. (2017) found that parents with higher acculturation level, which was marked by cultural preferences in the practice of daily life, tend to adopt a more positive parenting style. Compared with parents who favour their home country cultures, these parents are also less likely to get into intergenerational conflicts. In contrast, the study further suggests that parents' residency length in the new country of residence and their English language fluency do not have a significant impact on parenting style (Liu et al., 2017).

Chinese immigrant parents are willing to make considerable investments in their children's education and have high expectations for future generations (Li, 2009). These parents likewise make significant efforts to help their next generation adapt to the post-immigration environment and adjust their parenting styles to facilitate their children's acculturation and adaptation (Cheah et al., 2013). However, studies specifically focusing

on the relationship between parental perceptions on young children's language preference and familial relationships are sparse. Thus, it is evident that the current study is needed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of these nuanced relationships.

Definition of Terms

The major themes investigated and discussed in the research are parenting in the context of acculturation, heritage language maintenance and ethnic identity. To contextualize the issues addressed by this research, it is necessary to define acculturation, heritage language and ethnic identity.

Acculturation

The concept of acculturation refers to a set of changes that is the result of "contact between groups and individuals of different cultures" (Berry & Sabatier, 2011, p. 658). The developmental process of acculturation can be seen both at the collective level and the individual psychological level. At the collective level, the effects of acculturation are studied generally in relation to changes in the culture of the group such as multiculturalism, public policy and education. At the individual level, acculturation explores what happens to individuals' psychological and interpersonal adjustments when they attempt to settle in a new culture and explains the patterns of continuity and change (Berry, 1997). Since the current research is mainly concerned with Chinese immigrant families, it focuses more on the experience of individual acculturation.

Berry (1997) focuses on "how individuals who have developed in one cultural context manage to adapt to new contexts that result from migration" (p. 6) through the four acculturation strategies that illustrate the extent to which immigrants seek to preserve their cultural heritage and the degree to which they become immersed in the

dominant host society. He identifies and defines the four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. Assimilation occurs when the migrant individuals seek close interaction with the dominant or host culture, and do not wish to maintain their original culture. By contrast, the separation strategy is adopted when individuals are in favor of preserving their original culture over the cultural norms of a dominant or host culture. Integration occurs when individuals hold on to their original culture while developing daily interaction with other groups at the same time. Lastly, marginalization occurs when individuals reject both cultural maintenance and the dominant host culture. Berry (1997) suggests that among these four strategies, individuals who adopt the integration strategy are described as being most successful in adapting to the host society. In contrast, individuals falling into the marginalization category typically experience the most challenges in their path to adapting after immigration. The assimilation and separation strategies fall in between. Moreover, Berry states that the individuals' respective acculturation strategies may differ between their private and public life. For instance, an individual may employ the integration strategy when adapting to the host culture in public but use the separation strategy in private by rejecting the cultural norms of the dominant culture.

In addition, Berry (1997) identifies two major issues related to acculturation strategies: (1) cultural maintenance and (2) contact and participation. Cultural maintenance refers to the extent that cultural identity and its corresponding characteristics are prioritized and maintained, whereas contact and participation refers to the extent that an individual becomes involved in the new cultural group or engages primarily with members of their own culture. There are a variety of perspectives when studying how

immigrants adjust their cultural practice in order to integrate into the prevailing host society and maintain their original traditions at the same time. Culture here includes moral values, traditional customs, and language, which is the focus of the current study.

Heritage Language

In the context of English-centered America, Fishman (2001) defines heritage languages as those that are “languages other than English,” and that “have a particular family relevance to the learners” (p, 81). While America only has one official language, Canada has two. Thus, if applying Fishman’s logic, a heritage language in the context of Canada would include languages other than English or French. This is supported by Harrison (2000), who notes that a heritage language in Canada is “a language other than English or French” (p. 14). Fishman (2001) divides heritage languages into three categories: Indigenous, colonial, and immigrant heritage languages. In the context of Canada, Indigenous language may refer to the languages of Canada’s First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, while immigrant heritage languages may refer to the languages used in Canadian immigrants’ native countries. Colonial languages are likely not applicable here as the colonial languages would be French and English, the official languages of Canada.

Van Deusen-Scholl (2003) further clarifies the concepts of “heritage language” and “heritage learner” in a broader national policy context. He defines heritage learners as “students who have been exposed to another language in the home and have either attained some degree of bilingual proficiency or have been raised with a strong cultural connection to a particular language through family interaction” (p. 222). The broader definition of heritage language emphasizes the relevance language has within the family,

in which case heritage language is comparable to a second language from the perspective of linguistic competence. In addition, Valdés (2000) refers to heritage language as a language spoken by individuals who grow up in homes where a language other than the dominant language is spoken. The speakers could be to some degree proficient both in the dominant and the heritage language. In addition, Polinsky and Kagan (2007) note that although heritage speakers arrived with competence in the heritage language, they might develop a higher level of proficiency in the dominant language owing to the influence of social environment. They likewise identify that the speakers' proficiency level in the heritage language varies significantly among individuals, from near native speakers to basic users.

Moreover, Polinsky and Kagan (2007) put forward that the definition of heritage language in general continues to be under debate and needs to be specified especially for some particular languages. For instance, with the multiple dialects spoken by the Chinese population, speakers of different dialects are sometimes mistaken as heritage speakers of a single standard language. Thus, for the purposes of the current study, the term 'heritage language' refers to the languages of Canada's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples or a language that is other than English or French and is learned by newcomers at home in childhood. However, the current study focuses exclusively on the latter.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity is a multifaceted concept with no universal definition (Isajiw, 1993; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Isajiw (1993) notes that while ethnicity is a collective phenomenon, ethnic identity refers to the individual aspects of the phenomenon. He further defines ethnicity as "a manner in which persons, on account of their ethnic origin,

locate themselves psychologically in relation to one or more social systems, and in which they perceive others as locating them in relation to those systems” (p. 8). This definition is consistent with the description offered by Phinney and Ong (2007), who note ethnic identity is based on one’s conception of peoplehood within a broader social context, which can include groups, cultures, or specific social settings. They go on to note that the formation and variation of ethnic identity is shaped by a multiplicity of factors such as temporal, social, cultural, and geographic context.

The current study’s specific focus is on the relationship between immigrant children’s language preference and their distinct cultural identity. Thus, it is vital to analyze the development of immigrant children’s ethnic identity, which can be achieved by adopting Phinney’s (1993) multidimensional model of ethnic identity development. Phinney (1993) acknowledges the significant changes happening to a child during adolescence, including the development of cognitive abilities and ethnic identity. At this time, adolescents develop a greater understanding of things outside of their own community and take an increased interest in their social life and physical appearance. Phinney’s multidimensional development model divides the progress of adolescent identity formation into three stages: unexamined ethnic identity, ethnic identity search, and ethnic identity achievement. She concludes that the best outcome of the process is to establish a secure ethnic identity and an open attitude toward the mainstream culture.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the current study is to explore parental language attitudes among Chinese immigrant families and to understand how these attitudes influence the quality of parent-child communication and familial relationships. This can be achieved by

identifying the major challenges that immigrant parents encounter with respect to their children's language learning and examining how parental attitudes influence children's language engagements. Furthermore, this study seeks to examine how parental language attitudes and familial relations interact, specifically among Chinese immigrant families in the context of Canadian culture.

The current study explores Chinese immigrant children's language learning and its influence on parent-child relationship through the lens of parental attitudes. The formulation of appropriate research questions helps to develop a means through which in-depth information can be gathered from participants so as to ensure the success of the study. To this end, the researcher utilizes three key questions to guide this study:

1. What are Chinese immigrant parents' attitudes with respect to their children's language learning?
2. What are the major challenges that Chinese immigrant parents encounter with respect to their children's language learning?
3. How do parental language attitudes influence the quality of family communication and intra-family relationships?

Significance of the Study

The current study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of Chinese immigrant parents' perspectives on children's language preference and engagement. By studying how Chinese immigrant parents perceive their children's language learning, the study seeks to identify the challenges immigrant families encounter with regard to language learning and acculturation during their acculturative process. It likewise aims to

identify strategies that families can utilize to improve intra-family communication and relations.

To generate a comprehensive understanding of the support that children receive from their families, it is important to assess the role that parents play in their children's language engagement. The findings may help Canadian educators better understand Chinese immigrant families' acculturation difficulties during the post-immigration transition period. By identifying the challenges these families encounter, the study can help to promote interventions or programs that facilitate parental involvement and fluid parent-school communication with regard to immigrant children's language learning and their overall development.

The study likewise has the potential to help determine what resources are needed to facilitate immigrant children's effective integration with Canadian mainstream society while simultaneously preserving the unique cultural heritage of their native country. The findings may also have the potential to provide schools and communities with a clearer understanding of the processes that immigrant parents go through when acclimating their families to a new language environment. The study can also be informative for policy makers and provide insights that may potentially enhance the community's language services and thus ease immigrant children's cultural integration.

Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Given that Canada is currently host to over 1.2 million citizens and residents with Chinese ancestry (Statistics Canada, 2019b), it is critical to support the cultural needs of this community. This include facilitating their acculturation and the maintenance of their heritage language while recognizing and helping them maintain their ethnic identity. This

is especially important among parents in Chinese immigrant families, who must navigate shifting parenting approaches during their own acculturation process while supporting their children's acculturation at the same time that they seek to preserve their heritage. To this end, the current study aims to provide an enhanced exploration into Chinese immigrant parents' attitudes toward their children's language learning and offer insights into how children's language preference affects family communication and relationships. In the following chapters, the researcher elaborates the study design and findings. The second chapter reviews two leading theories related to the current study: the parental involvement theory and the framework of family communication patterns. These frameworks act as the theoretical guide for the current study. The third chapter presents a review of previous literature on Chinese heritage language maintenance, the relationship between language and ethnic identity, and parent-child relationships in immigrant families. The fourth chapter details the methodology and research design of the current study, and this includes ethical considerations and the researcher's self-reflection. The penultimate chapter provides an interpretation of the research findings based on the qualitative data collected through the interviews. Three major themes related to the participants' experiences are reported in this chapter: parents' school selection, children's post-immigration adaptation, and children's Chinese language learning. This chapter also discusses parents' attitudes towards children's learning of different languages and their perceptions on the quality of family communication and intra-family relationships. In the final chapter, conclusions are drawn from the study and a comprehensive summary of the study is provided. The final chapter also offers several implications for different stakeholders in immigrant children's language learning and highlights the importance of

collaboration between these stakeholders. In addition, this chapter emphasizes both the study's strengths and its weakness, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is guided by two leading theories: the parental involvement theory and the framework of family communication patterns. The theoretical model of parental involvement describes the factors that influence parental participation, the forms that parents choose to take for involvement, and the effects of parental involvement on their children's education. Alternately, the framework of family communication patterns provides a theoretical foundation through which researchers can analyze and assess communication among family members to understand an individual's overall growth and development. Because the current study seeks to assess Chinese immigrant parents' perceptions of their children's language learning and the parent-child relationship along their acculturation process in Canada, it thus adopts both the parental involvement theory and the framework of family communication patterns.

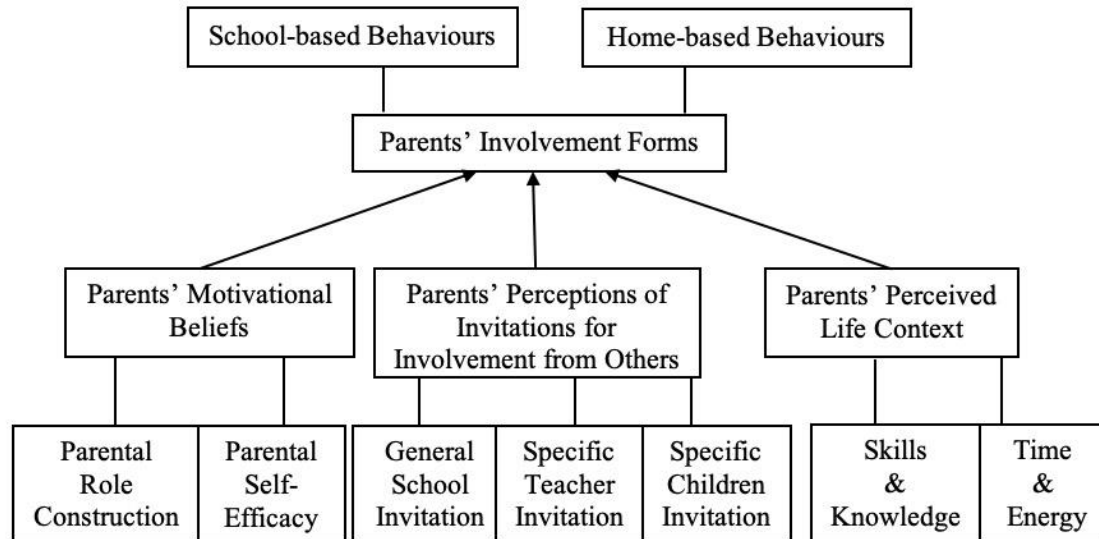
A Theoretical Model of Parental Involvement

A model of the parental involvement process proposed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) provides a theoretical framework to examine psychological factors that motivate parents to become involved in their children's education and the influences parental involvement have on children's outcomes. Walker et al. (2005) later revised this model by suggesting that a number of psychological and contextual contributors affect the pattern of parents' participation behaviour. The revised model describes forms of parents' involvement based on parents' school- and home-based activities. As illustrated in Figure 1, this model organizes major psychological factors that contribute to parental involvement into three categories: parents' motivational beliefs, parents' perceptions of

invitations for involvement from others, and parents' perceived life context (Green et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2005).

Figure 1

The Revised Theoretical Model of the Parental Involvement Process



Note. Adapted from "Parental involvement: Model revision through scale development," by J. M. T. Walker et al., 2005, *The elementary School Journal*, 106(2), p. 88 (doi:10.1086/499193).

Parents' Motivational Beliefs

With respect to involvement, parents' motivational beliefs are comprised of two components: parental self-efficacy with regard to helping children achieve academic success and parental role construction (Green et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2005). Parental self-efficacy explains that parents' expectations about whether their actions will produce anticipated outcomes shape their decisions and behaviours in involvement. This means that if the parents are confident that their participation will produce desired outcomes, they will be more likely to be committed to helping their children achieve success. Parental role construction contributes significantly to parents' beliefs about what they should do with respect to their children's education and is derived from parents'

perceptions about raising children and their own education experience. Both parental self-efficacy and role construction are socially constructed, which means social influences such as other people's successful experiences can shape and reshape parents' motivational beliefs over time (Green et al., 2007). For instance, if some parents are persuaded by their peers and come to recognize the importance of promoting heritage language, they will become willing to send their children to community language programs. Studies suggest that parents' active role construction and their positive belief in efficacy promote affirmative decision-making and increased participation pertinent to involvement in children's education (Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Walker et al., 2005).

Parents' Perceptions of Invitations for Involvement from Others

In the revised model of the parental involvement process, parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement consist of general invitations from the school and specific invitations from the teachers and children (Walker et al., 2005). General school invitations refer to an inviting school atmosphere that enhances parental involvement. For instance, a welcoming and supporting school climate would maintain a strong connection between parents and schools, respect parents' suggestions and decisions, and endorse parents' indispensable role in their children's education. Specific invitations from teachers directly motivate parental involvement because they demonstrate that teachers appreciate parents' contributions towards the children's education (Green et al., 2007). Teachers' encouraging invitations can be an effective means of increasing the frequency and efficiency of parental involvement practices (Green et al., 2007; Shumow & Miller, 2001; Simon, 2004). Implicit invitations from children occur when children encounter

difficulties in learning and are in need of their parents' support. Children's invitations often motivate parents to increase participation in response to their children's needs and thus facilitate children's success (Green et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2005). All the three types of invitations profoundly influence a parent's engagement in children's education. Likewise, these invitations also play a significant role in Chinese immigrant parents' engagement in their children's language learning. Positive motivators from the school, teachers and children could enhance parents' participation and help children achieve a balanced development in language study.

Parents' Perceived Life Context

According to the revised model by Walker et al. (2005), the third source that influences the parental involvement process is identified as the parents' perceived life context, which includes self-perceived skills and knowledge, and time and energy for involvement. Parents' perceived personal skills and knowledge impact their decisions and behaviours about involvement activities because parents who are confident with their ability believe they can be helpful in their children's education and are therefore more willing to get involved (Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). For example, Chinese parents who have adequate levels of English language proficiency may be more willing to communicate with their children in English, while parents who feel less comfortable in speaking English may be more likely to require their children to speak Chinese at home. Zhong and Zhou (2011) suggest that Chinese immigrant parents who perceive themselves as having insufficient language skills are less involved in their children's school activities. Parents' perception of their time and energy is another factor that influences involvement activities. According to Zhong and Zhou (2011), as a result

of demanding life schedules, the lack of time and energy is one of the key reasons that contributes to Chinese parents' limited participation in their children's school education.

Family Communication Patterns

Families are children's first educators and it is within the context of family that a child's primary cultural and social immersion takes place. Communication among family members is an impactful aspect of the parent-child relationship and the child's developmental outcomes. Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) define a family communication environment as "a set of norms governing the tradeoff between informational and relational objectives of communication" (p. 524). According to Koerner et al. (2017), the family communication patterns theory is "a grand theory of family communication" that offers an analytical and instructive tool in studying parent-child communication and family relationships (p. 142). The family communication patterns theory identifies parent-child communication as the fundamental process of establishing a shared social reality that not only has a significant influence on the current communication behaviours but also impacts an individual's long-term thinking process, psychosocial engagement, and behavioural performance (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006; Koerner et al., 2017). Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) suggest that childhood experiences with family communication could have continuous effects on the person's interpersonal relations throughout their lives. The theory categorizes communication patterns within a family and provides a foundation through which children's developmental outcomes are assessed and predicted.

Two Dimensions of Family Communication

The original model of family communication patterns was conceptualized to explain the process of two or more family members evaluating the same object and achieving a shared understanding regarding its meaning (McLeod & Chaffee, 2017). The model established two different ways that family members pursue a shared social reality: socio-orientation and concept-orientation. In a socio-oriented process, the family members conform to others' choices when there are different views and opinions. In doing so, the family prioritizes relational harmony over perceptive conflicts. Alternately, the concept-oriented family stresses the practice of conceptualizing by encouraging free expression and active debates. McLeod and Chaffee (2017) suggest that the ways a family achieves a shared agreement affect family members' communication behaviours. To this end, they developed the Family Communication Patterns Instrument, which facilitates research in media effects.

While the original family communication patterns were most concerned with the influences family communication patterns had on children's information processing, a revised version was later developed that emphasized the actual communication, its behavioural features, and psychosocial consequences (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). The revised family communication patterns theory model was later reconceptualized into a general theory of family communication (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006; Koerner et al., 2017; Ritchie, 1991; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). The theory redefined the two dimensions in family communication as conformity orientation and conversation orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Koerner et al., 2017; Ritchie, 1991; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Conformity orientation describes the degree to which a family promotes compliance with

familial attitudes and values and avoids conflicts. Children from highly conformity orientated families are expected to follow another family member's views and are usually more obedient. Alternately, conversation orientation refers to the extent to which a family encourages all members to participate in all kinds of topics and to exchange thoughts and feelings with each other. Families high in conversation orientation tend to emphasize open communication and the individuality and independence of family members. These two categories, though, are extremes, and families do not often fall entirely within one category. Instead, families usually fall somewhere within the spectrum of the two communication orientations.

Communication in Four Types of Families

With varying degrees of conformity and conversation orientations, the family communication schemata were captured in the theoretical construct of family communication patterns to classify family communicative behaviour and its psychosocial outcomes for children (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Koerner et al., 2017). This led to the development of four family types: consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire. Consensual families are high in both conversation and conformity orientation. These families encourage free expression and exploration of different viewpoints. However, they also make strong efforts to preserve family hierarchy, which means children are expected to conform to parents' decisions. Pluralistic families are high in conversation but low in conformity orientation. These families create an open communication environment that facilitates group decision making that involves both parents and children. Protective families, in contrast, are low in conversation but high in conformity orientation. Their communication is characterized by

putting a strong emphasis on obedience and compliance. Children from protective families tend to follow family standard to avoid open conflicts with parents. Finally, laissez-faire families are low in both conversation and conformity orientation. Parent-child interactions in these families are infrequent and the communication is often linked to a limited number of topics. Children from the laissez-faire families tend to be emotionally detached from their parents and are influenced more by external social sources, such as their peers.

Family Communicative Behaviour and Its Outcomes

The two dimensions in family communication in conjunction with the classification of four family types are often used to explore the influences family functioning processes have on children's psychosocial outcomes (Schrodt et al., 2008) and long-term development (Huang, 1999; Koesten, 2004; Schrodt & Ledbetter, 2007). For instance, a high level of conformity orientation is more associated with coercive characteristics than attachment or cohesion because families who adopt a conformity orientation emphasize compliance and are more likely to have strict rules and inflexible standards. Thus, individuals from these families tend to be more self-oriented and exhibit less empathy (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Koerner et al., 2017).

The family communication patterns framework has also been consistently proven to be an applicable communication theory when investigating familial conflicts and relationships (Orrego & Rodriguez, 2001; Zhang, 2007). According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002), the four family types deal with interpersonal conflicts in different manners. Consensual families tend to avoid trivial arguments but are willing to confront major disputes. Their experiences with conflict interactions are mostly positive and, with

support from outside the family, the negative effects of those conflicts are often alleviated. Protective families, of all the four types, are the most active in avoiding conflict. Nonetheless, they still encounter the most difficulties due to lack of conflict resolving skills and reluctance to seek support from outside the family. In contrast, pluralistic families consider conflict to be normal and are the most successful in coping with conflict. They are skillful in managing conflicts and their experiences are often positive and encouraging. Lastly, the laissez-faire families try to avoid most conflict interactions due to a low level of unity within the family. However, the consequences of unavoidable conflict tend to be negative, and the family members are often unwilling to seek outside help.

In addition to the communicative behaviour outcomes, family communication patterns have also been proven to have substantial influence on individual and collective psychosocial outcomes, such as depression and anxiety (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Koerner et al., 2017). The positive correlation between conversation orientation and psychosocial outcomes provides empirical insights in studies with regard to children's relational behaviours and mental well-being (Schrodt et al., 2008). According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002), children's resiliency against negative environmental influences is another feature that is closely linked with family communication patterns. Depending on family types, children differ in their expectations and reactions to the behaviour of others and often employ different interaction and integration strategies when coping with social situations, both within and outside of the family environment (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

In the context of immigration and acculturation, family communication patterns are central to understanding family communication and relationships as parental language attitudes may be interpreted in different ways. This may result in children's resistance to learning their heritage language and potential conflicts within the family. For instance, children from families that score high on conformity orientation are expected to follow their parents' advice and obey family standards when it comes to language preference. However, in families that emphasize conversation-oriented communication, children are encouraged to have discussions about the reasons why they prefer a certain language and are more typically given more autonomy and receive more support from their parents. Given the potential insights that family communication patterns can offer with regard to parent-child communication, the current study utilizes it to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how parental language attitudes shape familial relationships among Chinese immigrant families.

Summary

The theoretical foundation of this study combines the parental involvement theory and the framework of family communication patterns to explore how parental language attitudes affect Chinese immigrant children's language learning and family relationships. The theoretical framework in this study is dependent on four factors: the importance of parental involvement, the various factors that shape parents' involvement decisions, the patterns of family communication process, and the possible outcomes of family communicative behaviours. These factors allow the study's theoretical framework to model the effect of parental participation on children's language education in the course of immigration and acculturation.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

To study Chinese immigrant parents' attitudes with regard to their children's language learning, it is vital to review the literature related to immigrant parents' participation in their children's language learning, and the correlation between parental language attitudes and parent-child relationships. The literature review explores parental language attitudes from the following three broad categories: Chinese heritage language maintenance, language and ethnic identity, and parent-child relationships in immigrant families. Some existing research gaps are discussed at the end of this chapter.

Chinese Heritage Language Maintenance

When Canada first opened the residential schools and forcibly removed Indigenous children from their families, the school system sought to systematically erase their cultural identities by forbidding these young children from speaking their Native languages, which led to a loss of language, culture, and identity (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The Canadian government has recognized, in hindsight, the damage this caused to preserving the identity of Native Canadians, but a new generation of Canadians are facing a similar problem through the loss of language: Chinese Canadians. Though the structure of and reasons for this loss are different, the effect is similar. Many children of Chinese immigrants, immersed in Canada's Anglocentric though multicultural setting, have neither the time nor interest to learn Chinese and instead focus on English almost exclusively (Chiang, 2002; Jia et al., 2016). In losing their heritage language, they are losing touch with a significant part of their cultural identity.

Heritage language maintenance has been proven to have positive social and cultural influences on the lives of immigrant children. Immigrant children's proficiency in their heritage languages serves as an indicator for their connection and identification with their heritage cultures. Developing heritage language helps immigrant children to build a stronger sense of ethnic identity and ease the challenges of integration into the host society (Chhuon, 2011; Law, 2014). A higher heritage language competency promotes closer bonding among family members by reducing unnecessary misunderstanding and improving the quality of interaction (Chhuon, 2011; Lao, 2004). However, in an anglophone society, passing Chinese heritage language to the next generation is a demanding task among the Chinese immigrant families.

Unpromising Outlook for Chinese Heritage Language Maintenance

With an increasing number of Canadians speaking languages other than English or French at home, linguistic diversity is on the rise in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2019b). However, the growth of linguistic diversity does not necessarily mean that the retention of heritage language becomes any easier. Canada's official languages remain the pathways of convergence and integration into the mainstream society as 93.4% of Canadians spoke English or French at least on a regular basis at home (Statistics Canada, 2017). The fact suggests that the official languages are entering Canadians' homes regardless of origin or heritage and remain critical to Canada's diverse linguistic landscape. Even among immigrant families, children and youth tend to adopt English or French as their main language or as a secondary language. According to Canada's 2016 Census data, more than half of the immigrant population speak English or French most often at home (Statistics Canada, 2019c).

In a study conducted in America, Chhuon (2011) found that both younger children who immigrated to America during childhood and their America born second-generation peers prefer English as their primary communication language, even if they continue to use heritage language at home or in private. Consequently, these children may lose their heritage language over time, and by the third generation, their residual understanding of their heritage language may fade (Chhuon, 2011). Young immigrant children growing up in a host country may feel like they are straddling two different worlds, both socially and linguistically, and some of them may even feel the pressure of having to relinquish their heritage language and their ethnic identity. The previous studies on immigrant resettlement suggest that, for immigrant families, the complete shift to English is more likely to happen within a three-generation language shift process, and the heritage language is often considered lost over two generations (Chhuon, 2011; Lai, 2009; Law, 2014).

Factors that Influence the Promotion of Chinese Heritage Language

When examining the factors that influence whether parents promote the Chinese heritage language, there are three central themes to consider: language issues, parental efforts, and supports from schools and communities.

Language Issues

Among the immigrant languages, Chinese remains one of the most difficult mother tongues for immigrants to maintain. The challenges of maintaining Chinese language proficiency are particularly outstanding considering the structural differences between Chinese and other Indo-European languages. Based on a different character system, the pictographs characters of the Chinese language are particularly difficult to

write (Kim & Chao, 2009). It likewise requires significant effort and practice to master the oral Chinese language. The existence of various dialects and the lack of a single, unifying spoken dialect are impediments to promoting a common heritage language among immigrants from different ethnic groups. The two most common dialects spoken in Chinese Canadian homes—Mandarin and Cantonese—are emblematic of this. Though they share nearly the same written vocabularies, when spoken, the pronunciations of shared words are almost entirely different. Cantonese used to be the dominant dialect in many overseas Chinese communities because of its large immigration population (Chan, 2017; Li, 2018). However, over the past few decades, the strong influx of Mandarin-speaking immigrants has led to a gradual shift from Cantonese to Mandarin in Canada's Chinese communities (Jiang, 2010; Li, 2018), and data from the 2016 Census of Population indicates that the number of Mandarin speakers in Canada has overtaken the Cantonese-speaking population (Statistics Canada, 2019b). Mandarin's growing influence attributes to mainland China's economic and social development, and Chinese immigrants' perceptions of the usefulness of China's official language.

Although between diverse Chinese ethnic groups Mandarin is considered to be the common connection, the perspectives of Chinese heritage language maintenance are different across ethnic groups (Zhang, 2012). In a study conducted among Chinese families in America, Zhang (2012) found that for Mandarin group, the maintenance of Chinese language is considered to be beneficial in the transnational period because it helps the children to ease their acculturation process and develop a closer relationship with their peers from the same ethnic group while learning the language together. In contrast, the families from Fujian province perceive shifting to English as their only way

to integrate with the mainstream society and do not expect to improve their heritage language proficiency by engaging in their ethnic group networks (Zhang, 2012).

In addition to noting the distinctive features of Chinese language, less access to learning resources and limited opportunities to practice their mother tongue also contribute to the difficulties in preserving Chinese heritage language (Chhuon, 2011). Lao (2004) suggests that limited access to high-quality Chinese learning resources at home, insufficient exposure to a Chinese-speaking environment, and the parents' inadequate Chinese-language abilities inhibit immigrant children's development in bilingualism.

Parental Efforts

Heritage language maintenance and development cannot be achieved without a strong commitment from parents. Previous studies on Chinese immigrant families suggest that Chinese parents offer extensive support to bilingual education and most are keen about encouraging their children to speak the Chinese language at home (Lao, 2004; Riches & Curdt-Christiansen, 2010). Lao (2004) identifies three main reasons why parents are keen about developing bilingualism in their children as: (1) speaking heritage language fluently can facilitate communication within the Chinese communities, (2) bilingual education can help children build a more positive self-image, and (3) being bilingual can have practical benefits, such as better career prospects. Research has also confirmed that parents' high expectations and aspirations for their children's education are positively related to the children's success in linguistic and academic development (Costigan et al., 2010; Riches & Curdt-Christiansen, 2010). Parents' contribution to their children's heritage language learning is exhibited by providing learning materials and

maintaining a dynamic language environment, both at home and outside the school context, while actively supporting the school language at the same time.

Supports from Schools and Communities

Despite the vital role parents play in heritage language development, the parents alone cannot achieve success in the maintenance of their children's heritage language (Lao, 2004; Li & Wen, 2015; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). Li and Wen (2015) identified three major contexts that shape heritage language learning: the domestic sphere, community heritage language programs, and mainstream schools. Among the three contexts, community heritage language programs are considered the most effective with respect to teaching heritage language. However, it is also implicated that these community language programs are often confronted by various challenges, such as limited human and social resources (Li & Wen, 2015). Likewise, Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) express concerns about the fact that heritage language maintenance lacks a legitimate place in the mainstream education system, which thereby places language assimilation pressure on immigrant children and results in the passive reaction to the parents' efforts in heritage language development. It is suggested that schools provide parents with various learning materials and resources to assist students learning Chinese (Lao, 2004). Schools may also develop heritage language programs to involve parents in their children's language learning. Lao (2004) further suggests that a language program for parents would also be advantageous because a higher level of heritage language proficiency among parents would in turn foster their children's language learning.

To help immigrant children more effectively adapt and thrive in the host country, studies suggest that the mainstream school system work together with immigrant parents

and community heritage language programs to create a supportive environment for heritage language and culture maintenance (Lao, 2004; Li & Wen, 2015; Riches & Curdt-Christiansen, 2010). To adjust to the mainstream society and become integrated into the local culture, young immigrant children have to overcome difficulties both within and outside the mainstream education system. It is obvious that families play an indispensable role in their children's language development. However, for children to acquire adequate proficiency in the heritage language, families should make collaborated efforts with local communities and schools. More effective partnerships should be established to meet the different language needs and expectations coming from Chinese immigrant families (Lao, 2004). Providing the necessary resources in both children's homes and schools can benefit their language development (Riches & Curdt-Christiansen, 2010). Both communities and schools need to recognize the challenges immigrant families face and develop programs and curriculums to help children achieve academic success and healthy growth in general. Moreover, education systems need to promote diversity and encourage immigrant children to learn and promote their own social and cultural practices.

Language and Ethnic Identity

Language is the carrier and manifestation of a person's social identity. The process of achieving identity extends to all kinds of social activities in a child's life, and language learning penetrates all these social activities. The role that language learning plays in identity formation has appealed to many scholars. For instance, Norton (2013) identifies the role of language as "constitutive of and constituted by a language learner's identity" (p. 45). Her research demonstrates how learners construct and negotiate multiple identities through language, reframing relationships so that they may claim their

position as legitimate speakers. Chinese immigrant children come from a distinctive cultural background with different culture, language, behaviours, and other social practices. How they explore and develop their ethnic identity along with language learning is vital for their practice of ethnic diversity. A strong sense of ethnic identity has positive implications with respect to immigrant children's accomplishments in academics, psychological development, and social interactions in multicultural contexts (Costigan et al., 2009).

Heritage Language Fluency and Ethnicity

The maintenance of heritage language offers potential social and educational benefits and may act as a means to preserve cultural heritage. It also plays an essential role in the development of children's sociocultural identity (Law, 2014; Oh & Fuligni, 2010; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009).

Heritage language has been recognized as a pivotal influence on children's ethnic identity. For example, Oh and Fuligni (2010) report that the fluency of heritage language rather than the frequency of heritage language use is the salient predictor of ethnic identity. Moreover, other studies suggest that the correlation between fluency in heritage language and ethnic identity among Chinese immigrants differs by generation (Kim & Chao, 2009; Li & Wen, 2015). Fluency in the heritage language is expected to play a greater role in the ethnic identity of first-generation than in second-generation immigrants. The first-generation immigrants hold a higher value of the language and culture that they brought with them (Kim & Chao, 2009), and it is assumed that second-generation immigrant youth may be similar in their attachment and exploration of ethnic identity. However, among second-generation Chinese adolescents, a strong sense of

ethnic identity is not necessarily related to a high level of heritage language fluency (Chiang, 2002; Kim & Chao, 2009; Li & Wen, 2015). As noted by Chiang (2002), second-generation Chinese youth are less motivated to learn the heritage language and tend not to associate the meaning of being Chinese closely with fluency in their heritage language. Kim and Chao (2009) further demonstrate that second-generation Chinese adolescents construct their ethnic identity more in relation to other factors, such as parental values, rather than the use of heritage language. As second-generation Chinese youth are born in a new country of residence, their ethnic identity is more closely linked to values emphasized by their immigrant parents, for example academic success, than it is to their use of the heritage language (Chiang, 2002). In addition, because of the relative difficulty of acquiring Chinese, it may be that second-generation Chinese are unable to achieve a sufficient level of fluency in the heritage language to use as a basis for establishing an ethnic identity.

Language Proficiency and Acculturation

Based on their own literature review, Costigan et al. (2009) conclude that there is a bidimensional feature to the acculturation process. They suggest separating the retention of heritage culture and the adaptation to mainstream culture when assessing an individual's development of ethnicity. While retention of one's ethnic language is perceived as a cultural resource for providing access to the ethnic community, acquisition of the host country's official languages is likewise associated with the mainstream culture in a reciprocal relationship. The bidirectional path is explained when identification with the mainstream culture is related to a higher level of proficiency in the official languages.

For children from immigrant families, their strong desire to attain effective reading and communication skills in the official languages of their host countries motivates them to integrate with the mainstream culture. Likewise, active participation in mainstream cultural activities positively motivates immigrant youth to study the official languages. The goals and motivations in turn help young immigrants to achieve social interaction and participation outside their own cultural and linguistic groups (He, 2010; Jia et al., 2016). The link between official language proficiency and mainstream acculturation is comparable to the relationship between heritage language and ethnic identity but is different in some ways. In a study conducted in the United States, Yeh et al. (2008) adopt English language proficiency as their key indicator for acculturation level because language usage provides access to the mainstream culture, facilitates cultural adjustment, and predicts better academic performance. Proficiency in English enhances immigrant adolescents' ability to cope with different cultures and adjust to the new cultural setting. In contrast, poor English language proficiency is identified as the most significant barrier for cultural integration and is also considered a source of stress in terms of performance and experience (Ladky & Peterson, 2008; Yeh et al., 2008). A reciprocal relationship between English proficiency and acculturation was identified by Jia et al. (2016), who found a positive correlation between identification with the mainstream culture and a higher level of English proficiency.

In the Canadian context, the learning of the official languages is also seen as an important factor that affects motivation to acculturate among Chinese immigrant children. The Chinese parents' commitment to multilingualism is further extended through their active involvement and support for their children's learning of Canadian

official languages. These parents consider proficiency in the official languages to be essential social capital for young immigrants with respect to obtaining social-economical achievement. They perceive the value of multilingual proficiency as necessary for advancement socially, economically, and linguistically (Curd-Christiansen, 2009; Riches & Curdt-Christiansen, 2010). Therefore, these parents urge their children to develop a high level of multilingual proficiency.

Parental Involvement and Ethnic Identity

Previous research also highlights the significant role parents play in a child's ethnic identity formation (Costigan et al., 2009). Phinney et al. (2001) indicate that parental encouragement of cultural maintenance has a significant positive effect on children's development of ethnic identity, both directly and through the promotion of heritage language maintenance. Many Chinese parents expect their children to develop a strong sense of ethnic identity through heritage language learning. Chinese language is used as a bridge to enhance the children's sense of belonging within the ethnic community and to facilitate the formation of the children's identity. These parents perceive language as a cultural tool through which their children can obtain access to Chinese culture and values (Riches & Curdt-Christiansen, 2010).

Costigan et al. (2009) suggest that within the family environment, multiple factors influence children's ethnic identity formation. They indicate that mothers' high expectations with respect to children's performance related to family obligations and acceptance of their parents' expectations, along with parents' positive and supportive parenting styles, contribute to higher levels of ethnic identity. The existing literature related to parental involvement and ethnicity is primarily based on mothers' perspectives;

thus, future studies should encourage more immigrant Chinese fathers to participate so as to explore the issue from different perspectives.

Parent-Child Relationship in Immigrant Families

To develop an understanding of parent-child relationship in immigrant families, it is important to examine language attitudes and generational differences, as well as language learning and family cohesion.

Language Attitudes and Generational Differences

Studies focusing on immigrant populations have long noted the generational differences in linguistic acculturation (Boutakidis et al., 2011; Crane et al., 2005; He, 2010; Hua & Costigan, 2011; Oh & Fuligni, 2010; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). Among immigrants of Chinese origin, parents often perceive heritage language proficiency as a resource and are willing to support their next generation to enhance the native language proficiency (He, 2010; Lao, 2004; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). However, the significance of heritage language learning is not often appreciated by immigrant children, and some children refuse to accept parents' encouragement with regard to heritage language learning (Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). For example, according to some studies done in the United States, immigrant parents are typically more fluent in their family's heritage language and have more difficulty fully developing native English proficiency compared to their children (Boutakidis et al., 2011; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009).

Oh and Fuligni (2010) further note the generational differences between first- and second-generation Asian American adolescents in their respective relationships with language use and heritage language proficiency. They note that first-generation Asian

American adolescents exhibited a significantly wider variation of proficiency with respect to their heritage language than did the second-generation counterparts. Their study also reports several reasons that might account for this phenomenon but did not specify which among the several possibilities could be confirmed and which were the most strongly correlated with the phenomenon. However, they did conclude that heritage language proficiency may be a stronger predictor of language use among first-generation than second-generation Asian American adolescents. Likewise, Oh and Fuligni (2010) state that second-generation Asian American adolescents' language choice could be a factor and that the lack of opportunities that second-generation Asian American adolescents have to practice their heritage language also shapes the phenomenon. The study also suggests that the generational differences in heritage language is unique to Asian American immigrants.

Language Learning and Family Cohesion

The generational differences in language engagement may negatively impact family cohesion and children's development (Crane et al., 2005; Hua & Costigan, 2011; Tseng & Fuligni, 2000; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). The generational gap in language preference may create barriers to effective intrafamilial communication. Some immigrant children's adverse attitude toward their heritage language even brings tension into immigrant families (Hua & Costigan, 2011; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). Previous research has explored immigrants' acculturation experiences, revealing that immigrant children's shift to English monolingualism could lead to disruptions in family relationships (Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). Language barriers may disrupt

immigrant children's everyday communication with family members, which in turn lead to unnecessary disputes within the family.

The use and proficiency of heritage language has been proven to have a positive impact on parent-child relationships among immigrant families (Boutakidis et al., 2011; Luo & Wiseman, 2000; Tseng & Fuligni, 2000). In a study among adolescents with East Asian, Filipino, and Latin American backgrounds, Tseng and Fuligni (2000) found that closer bonding and effective communication between parents and adolescents exist among families in which parents and adolescents used their heritage language when speaking with each other, rather than using a combination of languages to communicate, or using English exclusively. The study also found that the association between language use and the quality of parent-adolescent relationships is consistent across diverse immigrant groups. Likewise, Luo and Wiseman (2000) report that in families where mother and adolescent enjoy a high cohesive relationship, mothers' attitudes toward heritage language maintenance are found to be positively associated with their children's level of heritage language proficiency. Boutakidis et al. (2011) support a positive association between adolescents' heritage language fluency and their respect for their parents. Their findings indicate that maintaining heritage language proficiency may facilitate parent-child relationship through clearer communication and a more comprehensive understanding of their heritage culture. Oh and Fuligni (2010) further distinguish the influences of heritage language proficiency and language use patterns on immigrant-background adolescents. They found that it is immigrant adolescents' heritage language proficiency, rather than their choice of language, that is positively associated with the quality of parent-adolescent relationships. That is, the reliable factor affecting

immigrant adolescents' healthy development with regard to family relationships is their ability to communicate in the heritage language, not the frequency with which they speak the language (Oh & Fuligni, 2010).

Literature Gaps

Chinese immigrant parents understand the role language plays both in facilitating their children's integration into the mainstream society and in the formation of their unique ethnic identity. These parents offer extensive support for the development of their children's bilingual/multilingual skills (Lao, 2004). They are often willing to support and invest in children's language learning and also have high expectations for their children's language development. Unfortunately, the actual practice does not always meet the parents' high expectations (Lao, 2004; Riches & Curdt-Christiansen, 2010). This is in part due to the fact that the structural difference between Chinese and the anglophone languages makes it difficult to develop Chinese heritage language fluency among immigrant children. In addition, less accessible educational and linguistic resources for these heritage language learners makes preserving the language even more challenging. This is compounded by the fact that the acculturation differences between parents and children potentially create conflicts within the family and hinder children's overall development (Ho, 2014).

The reviewed studies explored the unique circumstances that Chinese immigrant families encounter when adapting to a new cultural environment that differs from their ethnic identity. However, studies specifically focusing on parental perceptions on young children's linguistic acculturation are sparse. The nuanced relationships between parental language attitudes and familial relationships have not been addressed sufficiently in the

available body of literature. Though some studies, such as the one conducted by Oh and Fuligni (2010), identify associations among heritage language proficiency, ethnic identity and family relationships, they do not necessarily address the nature of these associations. For example, it is not clear whether heritage language proficiency enhances healthy development in areas such as familial relations, or whether close family relationships facilitate language development. It is evident that future studies should attempt to develop a more thorough understanding of these nuanced relationships.

In addition, most of the available studies are about the experiences of Chinese immigrants in the United States (Lao, 2004; Zhang, 2012); few studies have specifically explored the implications of parental language attitudes in a Canadian setting. Although America and Canada share many similarities culturally and linguistically, they have distinct cultural, political, and demographic differences, as well as vastly different education systems. The life experience for immigrant families is not always the same across the border. Different practices in either country influence language learning for immigrant families. Thus, more research is needed in relation to parental language attitudes focusing on the specific immigrant population of Chinese origin in Canada.

The identified gaps necessitate new research that focuses on the Chinese immigrant families within the Canadian multilingual setting so as to provide evidence on parental language attitudes and the influence of language learning. Thus, the current study intends to fill the gap by conducting qualitative research. The findings aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of what is required to support positive parenting behaviours and promote healthy intergenerational relationships in Chinese immigrant families.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the current study is to develop an in-depth understanding of Chinese immigrant parents' perceptions of their children's language learning and language preference. The study also explores parent-child relationships using the parents' language attitudes as a filter. To achieve this goal, a qualitative case study was conducted. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology used in this study, which includes six considerations: research design, recruitment of participants, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and the reflection upon the researcher's role in the study.

Research Design

According to Stake (2010), in the qualitative side of science, "personal experience, intuition, and skepticism" work together to contribute to knowledge and theories (p.11). Based on this understanding, a qualitative study that relies primarily on human perceptions would be ideal for exploring the current study's research questions. Thus, the current study has adopted a qualitative research model, specifically a case study approach, given the nature and scope of the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) define case study research as a qualitative methodology in which the investigator

explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes. (p. 153)

Yin (2018) suggests that case studies can be used to explore situations that are technically distinct and feature an enormous number of variables of interest and likewise inform the research process and analysis using preceding theoretical perspectives. In addition, he notes that case studies are ideal when the research has limited or no control with regard to the behaviour of participants in the events that occur in their lives. Because the current study explores a relatively recent phenomenon and a controlled environment is not applicable, using a case study approach is the most suitable option. In addition, a multiple-case study provides additional data points, which can be utilized to triangulate data and validate the experiences of multiple participants (Yin, 2018). This allows the researcher to determine whether a given piece of data from one participant is anecdotal in nature or part of a broader trend. For these reasons, this research uses multiple cases to provide different viewpoints on Chinese parents' perceptions of their children's language learning.

Recruitment of Participants

The Canadian population has become increasingly diversified over the years. In 2016, the growing immigration population made up nearly 21.9% of the country's population (Statistics Canada, 2019a). Ontario specifically is host to nearly 4 million immigrants. Since the largest immigrant population comes from Asia, it is not surprising that Chinese immigrants comprise one of the largest immigrant populations in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2019a). The research was conducted in Windsor, a diverse city located at the southern end of Ontario, Canada. According to Statistics Canada (2019a), 27.8% of Windsor's population is immigrant, and China is the place of birth for 7.9% of immigrants who came to Windsor between 2011 and 2016. As a city with a long history

of Chinese immigration and a relatively high density of Chinese population, Windsor provides more cultural support and opportunities for immigrant children to maintain their heritage culture than locations with fewer immigrants. The trends of Windsor's demographical diversification make the city an ideal place for conducting research related to Chinese immigrant families.

In order to obtain different viewpoints on Chinese immigrant parents' perceptions of their children's language learning, the study aimed to recruit 6-10 participants from Chinese-Canadian immigrant families in Windsor. The recruitment criteria required that participants be Chinese parents who have at least one child studying in elementary or secondary school. The participant family should have lived in Canada for at least five years. A relatively small sample was used to gather in-depth data that is manageable yet sufficient enough to provide an understanding of the similarities and differences among all of the cases. Stake (2006) recommends studying no more than ten cases in order to provide enough interactivity and facilitate the identification of significant themes at the same time. In addition, a relatively small number of participants minimize the resources and time needed to assess them, which encourages completion of the study.

A combination of typical sampling and snowball sampling were employed as the sampling strategy for this study. According to Creswell (2012), typical sampling is "a form of purposeful sampling in which the researcher studies a person or site that is 'typical' to those unfamiliar with the situation" (p. 208). After obtaining approval from the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board, the researcher initially used the typical sampling approach to recruit qualified participants. Because the study was conducted in the uncertain time of the global COVID-19 pandemic, participant recruitment and data

collection were conducted online to avoid in-person interaction and limit health risks of both the participants and the researcher. WeChat, a Chinese social media platform was used to post the recruitment letter and conduct on-line interviews. To invite volunteers to participate in the study, the researcher first posted the recruitment letter in a number of chat groups, including ones organized by the Chinese Association of Greater Windsor, as well as some parent groups in the area. However, due to limitations, this typical sampling did not procure enough perspective participants within two weeks. Therefore, the researcher followed up with snowball sampling by asking two of her participants to forward the recruitment letter to WeChat groups they have access to. Subsequently, several individuals reached out to the researcher to show their interest in the research. The researcher then built contacts with them and established their willingness to participate. Through the combination of the two sampling approaches, the researcher successfully recruited eight participants for this research.

Demographic Information

Eight participants were recruited, but their demographic information varied to some degree. With respect to gender, seven of the participants were mothers, and one father. All participants have children currently enrolled in elementary or secondary schools in the Windsor region. Participants were asked to provide general information with regard to their length of residence in Canada, educational background and number of children they have. The participants' demographic characteristics are important to the study because they provide the background information of the participants that was utilized in data analysis. These demographic data are illustrated in Table 1. To protect the privacy of participants, each parent was assigned a pseudonym in this reporting.

Table 1 Description of Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Participants	Gender	Length of residence in Canada	Educational Background	Number of Children
Emma	Female	7.5 years	Bachelor of Education	1
Mary	Female	7.5 years	Master of Laboratory Medicine	1
Kevin	Male	Almost 30 years	Degree in Criminal Justice	1
Julia	Female	11 years	Graduate Certificate in Nursing	2
Grace	Female	18 years	Bachelor of Finance	2
Wendy	Female	9 years	Master of Economics	2
Mia	Female	Almost 8 years	Master of Public Administration	2
Tiffany	Female	9 years	Bachelor of Arts in English	2

Almost all of the participants are female with only one exception. At the initial stage of participant recruitment, one male candidate contacted the researcher and exhibited interest in the study. However, he later recommended his wife to take part in the interview because she was the one who took primary responsibility for children's education at home. Another male candidate likewise contacted the researcher and volunteered to participate; however, this candidate was a native Cantonese speaker with limited Mandarin and English proficiency, and he had limited time for the interview. The researcher got a chance to have a brief chat with this candidate, but the communication was impeded due to the language barrier as the pronunciation difference between the two

Chinese dialects—Cantonese and Mandarin—made the communication difficult and would have likely corrupted the data. The researcher later excluded this candidate from the one-on-one interview.

All participants in this research immigrated to Canada at least 7.5 years before the interview, and one had been in Canada for nearly 30 years. They all have high levels of education: Among the eight participants, two of them have a college degree, three have a bachelor's degree, and the other three each have a master's degree. The participants have diversified professional backgrounds, including stay-at-home-mom, real-estate agency, freelance photographer, and border services officer.

Data Collection

The research used a one-on-one interview as the primary approach for data collection. Creswell (2012) describes a one-on-one interview as “a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time” (p. 218). Interviews in qualitative research encourage the participants to share their experiences and perspectives through in-depth conversation. They provide reliable information pertinent to the research topic because the interviewer is able to take control of the conversation through asking specific questions (Creswell, 2012). Thus, the researcher conducted individual interviews with all eight participants to explore their perspectives on the research questions. With the recommendation of social distancing in relation to COVID-19 pandemic, all one-on-one interviews were conducted via telephone and/or WeChat. The interview time was arranged according to the convenience of each participant.

Mandarin Chinese was the native language for both the participants and the researcher; therefore, all interviews were conducted in Mandarin. Using a familiar language helps the researcher to develop a trusting relationship with her participants, which in turn allows the participants to feel comfortable opening up about their experiences and sharing their ideas. Likewise, being able to speak in their native language allowed the participants to express themselves more clearly, thereby maximizing the data collection. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. Before each interview started, the researcher reviewed two items with the participants: the letter of information for consent to participate in research (see Appendix A) and the consent for audio recording (see Appendix B). The researcher provided all pertinent information, answered additional questions the participants had, and informed participants about their rights. All participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of participation and gave verbal agreement to participate in the research.

During the interview, the researcher used an interview guide (see Appendix C) to keep the interviews on track and help the participants stay focused on the questions. The interview guide consists of a few background questions and three sets of open-ended questions. The background questions were asked at the beginning of each interview to serve as icebreakers. They were also used to collect the participant's general information, such as their education level, residence length in Canada, and number of children in their immediate family. The main part of the interview consisted of three sets of open-ended questions, which focused on exploring the participants' experiences based on their own perspectives. Open-ended questions were advantageous because they encouraged the participants to express themselves more openly and honestly and allowed the participants

to provide more information on the covered topic, including their concerns and feelings (Creswell, 2012). The first part of the open-ended questions was developed to explore the participant's general attitudes towards their children's language learning and language preference. Questions related to school selection and home language environment were asked in this part. The second part focused on parental involvement activity and their expectations of children's language learning. The parents were also asked to describe the challenges they experience with their children's language learning and the strategies they have used to address the challenges. The last part inquired about parent-child relationships, including the quality of parent-child communication and children's interaction with their grandparents. All interviews were audio-recorded with a digital recording device. Field notes were also taken during the interviews to record the setting of each interview, the description of the interviewee, and other observations that the audio recording might miss.

Data Analysis

Following the data collection, the audio recordings were immediately transcribed for analysis. The data were first transcribed in Chinese to deliver a more accurate capture of the information provided by each participant. Then the researcher translated the Chinese text data into English for preliminary analysis. Both the interview transcripts and translations were double checked to ensure data accuracy. The analysis started with a review and reading of all the descriptive data. Notes were taken to track the reading and to filter data by highlighting key points. To make sense of all the collected information, the researcher followed the suggestions provided by Creswell (2012): the data were first broken down to examine individual responses in detail and then placed together to

identify emerging patterns and themes. During this process, the data were coded and categorized for comparison and summarisation. The analysis process was repeated several times before an interpretation to answer the research questions was formed. The findings from data analysis will be discussed in the following chapter to address the research questions.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the research was conducted according to ethical principles, the researcher first obtained approval from the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board before data collection. The interview participants were Chinese immigrant parents and they were able to fully understand the purpose of the study and the interview procedure; thus, no special approval was needed. Verbal consent was given by each participant before the individual interview started. The researcher ensured that all data were collected through an appropriate method, and all participants' identification information were protected and kept confidential. Personal information, such as names, was excluded when recording the data. Pseudonyms were assigned interview participants to protect their privacy. All data were stored in an encrypted file in the researcher's password-protected personal computer. The researcher and her supervisor were the only people who had access to all the data.

For the purpose of examining the central issue in depth, the participants might have engaged in personal conversations during the interview, and there was a risk that some of the questions might have provoked participants to recall unpleasant experiences that may have a negative impact on the participant's emotions. In view of such circumstances, the researcher reminded the participants that they had the right to pass

over uncomfortable questions that they did not want to answer. The participants were also reminded that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time up to the point of the completion of data analysis. Once data analysis was complete, the participants were no longer able to withdraw consent or ask for data destruction.

Each of the participants was given a \$20 Tim Hortons' E-gift card as compensation for their time. Had a participant chosen to withdraw from the study before the interview started, the compensation would not have been provided, though this was not an issue. However, had a participant decided to withdraw after the interview started, the compensation would have still been provided, though this did not happen either.

Though the study was not designed to offer participants direct benefits, their participation may prove beneficial in some ways. For example, the study provides the participants an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences in assisting their children in navigating linguistic diversity. This may help the participants develop a deeper understanding of their children's language learning experience in a multilingual country. The findings of the study would be informative for educators who seek to develop interventions or programs that facilitate parental involvement and fluid parent-school communication with regard to students' language learning and their overall development. The study may also provide insights that could potentially enhance the community's language services and thus facilitate immigrant children's cultural integration.

Researcher's Self Reflection

According to Stake (2010), when conducting a qualitative study, researchers are often subjectively involved in the study and base interpretations on personal understandings. Sutton (2015) likewise suggests that it is almost unavoidable for

qualitative researches to eliminate their own biases because of the researchers' active involvement in the entire research process. Thus, it is important for qualitative researchers to reflect upon their own perspectives and positions in the research. It is critical that researchers recognize and articulate their own subjectivities so that readers can evaluate the objectivity of the research (Sutton, 2015). Alternately, to safeguard the reliability and validity of the research, researchers must always represent the participants' feelings and statements and continually reflect upon their own potential biases to avoid projecting their perspectives onto the participants. Therefore, to maintain the integrity of the current study, the researcher carefully adhered to these standards throughout the research process.

As a Chinese international student studying education in a Canadian university, the researcher has become involved in the local Chinese Canadian community and has made connections with some of the local parents and students. The researcher has had the opportunity to hear some young adults reflect on their growth experiences and has also come to know the concerns immigrant parents have about their children's language preference and engagements. Confused by the challenges that are inherent in the process of cultural and social integration, many Chinese parents and their young children struggle to make connections both within the family and among the social communities. The researcher has experienced similar challenges with her own children's language learning, cultural conflicts, and social change when she and her family first came to Canada. These experiences not only inspired the researcher to take a strong interest in and thoroughly investigate the phenomenon but also motivated the researcher to conduct the current research to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the issue and help Chinese

immigrant families to more effectively cope with the pressures of integrating into Canadian culture.

Being actively involved in the local Chinese Canadian community, the researcher herself is a member of the WeChat community from which the participants were recruited. Because the researcher was not in a position of authority or seniority, this familiarity only constituted a minimal risk to any potential participants. The participants would have not been concerned about any negative consequences if they had refused to participate. Among the eight parents recruited for participation, two of them knew the researcher personally before they took part in the research. To minimize interviewer bias in the research, the interview questions were carefully phrased to avoid the participants answering questions in a way that they think would produce a right or desirable answer. During the interview, the researcher encouraged the participants to describe their own experiences and perspectives based on their own views and thoughts. Leading questions and wording were avoided, and the researcher tried not to overlook options that might matter to the participants. When analyzing the collected data, the researcher stayed true to the participants' responses, prevented the projection of her own perspective onto the data, and minimized misinterpreting findings and reporting bias as much as possible. Throughout the research process, the researcher continuously reflected on her own role and was forthcoming about her own subjectivities so as to maintain the validity and reliability of the research.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter describes the findings from the data collected through the semi-structured interviews. To contextualize the interview results, it is important to first outline the children's background information and then offer an in-depth exploration of all participants' perspectives. Based on the data analysis, three major categories related to the participants' experiences arose: parents' school selection, children's adaptation, and children's Chinese language learning. In addition, this chapter offers insights into parents' attitudes towards children's learning of different languages and their perceptions on the quality of family communication and intra-family relationships.

Children's Background Information

The one-on-one interview also gathered general background information relating to the children in the participant families. The eight participants brought thirteen children into the current study. Kevin, Emma, and Mary each had one child, while the remaining participants each had two children. Among their thirteen children, only one was enrolled in post-secondary education; the rest were enrolled in local elementary and secondary schools with grade levels ranging from Grade 1 to Grade 10. There were three children attending public secondary schools: one in Grade 10 and the other two in Grade 9. The remaining nine children were all in elementary schools: three in Grade 1, one in Grade 5, two in Grade 6, two in Grade 7, and one in Grade 8. Among the nine children who were attending elementary schools, three were enrolled in English program elementary schools with two in a Christian private school and one in a public school. The remaining six children were all in a French immersion public school. Nearly half of the children were born and raised in Canada; the remaining seven children all came to Canada with their

family at an early age. The child who was in university immigrated to Canada when he was ten, while both Mia's elder son and Tiffany's elder son moved to Canada at the age of eight. The remaining four children came to Canada before registering in elementary school. Table 2 summarizes the children's general background information, outlining their age, grade level, the types of schools they attended, and their age when the family moved to Canada.

Table 2 Description of Children's Background Information

Participants	Number of Children	Children's Age	Grade Level	School Type	Children's Moving to Canada
Emma	1	7	Grade 1	Christian Private School - English Program	Born in Canada
Mary	1	11	Grade 5	Public Elementary School - French Immersion	At age 3
Kevin	1	14	Grade 8	Public Elementary School - English Program	Born in Canada
Julia	2	13	Grade 7	Public Elementary School - French Immersion	At age 4
		7	Grade 1	Public Elementary School - French Immersion	Born in Canada
Grace	2	16	Grade 10	Public Secondary School	Born in Canada
		13	Grade 7	Public Elementary School - French Immersion	Born in Canada
Wendy	2	Unknown	University	Not applicable	At age 10
		7	Grade 1	Christian Private School - English Program	Born in Canada
Mia	2	15	Grade 9	Public Secondary School	At age 8
		12	Grade 6	Public Elementary School - French Immersion	At age 5
Tiffany	2	17	Grade 9	Public Secondary School	At age 8
		14	Grade 6	Public Elementary School - French Immersion	At age 5

School Selection

For the purpose of the current study, it is important to understand the language programs offered at the schools that the parents chose for their children. Thus, for the four children who were attending secondary school and university, apart from the current schooling information, the researcher took a further step to enquire about the types of elementary schools they attended. Among the four older children, only Grace's son graduated from the French immersion public school. The other three were all placed in public English programs when they were in elementary schools. With regard to the other nine children who were attending elementary schools, three were enrolled in English programs and the other six were placed in a French immersion program. These results are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 Compilation of Children's Elementary School Information

Elementary School Type	French Immersion Program	English Program	
	Public School	Public School	Christian Private School
Number of Children	7	4	2

Factors for Choosing an English Program

Six children were enrolled in English program elementary schools, including the three who had already graduated from elementary school and were now studying in secondary and post-secondary schools at time of the interview. Four of the six were in public schools, while the other two were in a Christian private school. The parents chose English programs for these children for different reasons, including language of the program, school management, and religious reasons.

Language of the Program

Among the four children who were enrolled in English program public schools, only Kevin made the decision on his own initiative. He stated that, although Canada is a French-English bilingual country, the population of English speakers far outnumbers French speakers; thus, he chose an English program school for his son. It was noteworthy that Kevin had lived in Canada for about 30 years, which was the longest among all the participants, and he was the only participant who received secondary education in Canada. Although he did not mention it, his Canadian education background might have played a role when selecting a school for his son. The other three children who were in public English program schools were Wendy's elder son, Mia's elder son and Tiffany's elder son. The three mothers all mentioned that French immersion program did not accept children after the beginning of Grade One, and each of their elder sons came to Canada at the ages past the enrollment threshold; thus, English programs were chosen. Wendy's elder son and Mia's elder son went to an ESL (English as a Second Language) program that helped prepare them to enter the regular classroom. Both mothers believed that the program helped their children to adapt to the English-speaking environment. Tiffany's son had a similar experience: He came to Canada at the age of eight and was also required to take a language test to determine whether he needed assistance from the ESL program. Although he passed the test and stayed in the regular classroom during the transition, it took him significant effort to adapt.

Emma's son transferred from French immersion to an English program school after he had a difficult time adapting to the French learning environment and could not keep up with his studies. Emma recalled that she "took for granted that children would learn languages quickly" and did not give her choice careful consideration before

registering in the French program. After about half a year in the program, she realized that “every child is different” and decided to change her son’s school plan. The family was quite satisfied with this decision, and Emma described her son’s progress in the new school as “noticeable.”

Wendy, whose younger son was in the same Christian school, had a similar concern over language learning. She explained why she did not “follow the trend among Chinese immigrant parents” to send her son to French immersion. She stated that because she and her husband did not speak French, they would not be able to assist him with his studies if their son needed help with French assignments and homework. She worried that being unable to offer support would be “frustrating.” Wendy reaffirmed her decision by stating that, “He will learn French, but only after he has built a solid foundation in English. That way, learning French will be much easier for him.”

School Management

School management was another factor that affected Wendy’s decision. She mentioned that, upon her observation at the church’s Sunday school, she found that children from the Christian school were “good at obeying the rules but still active in learning.” She believed these children’s behaviours demonstrated the school’s excellent management. Likewise, Emma perceived that teachers in the Christian school were “highly responsible and hard-working” and shared “a relatively similar education concept with the Chinese families.” Coming from a Confucian pedagogical context, Emma felt it was important that her children’s education put a heavy emphasis on respecting authority and establishing clear hierarchies. Thus, the approach Christian school used was more in line with Emma’s Confucian concept of what education should be.

Family Religious Background

Wendy was the only participant who considered religion as a factor during school selection. Wendy and her husband are both Christians, and their solid foundation of faith provided spiritual support in their parenting practice. Thus, they wanted their children to “get to know God from the earliest year of their lives.” In addition, Wendy believed that teachers from religious schools are “extra loving” and she intended to continue with a religious school “to the end.” Though Emma likewise chose a Christian school, her reasons seemed to be based on shared values—such as diligence, responsibility, and respect for authority—and not specifically religious beliefs.

Reasons for Selecting a French Immersion Program

The majority of the children in the current study were enrolled in the same French immersion elementary school. The most frequently mentioned reasons that the parents had their children enrolled in a French immersion school were the opportunity to learn a third language, school ranking, and convenience.

The Opportunity for Learning a Third Language

The parents chose French immersion primarily because it offered the opportunity to learn one more language other than English and Chinese. Several parents believed that, when it comes to learning foreign languages, children are much more adept than adults. For example, Grace mentioned that she thought her son “had some talent in language learning;” thus she “sent him to the French immersion program.” This is consistent with Julia’s statement that “Children have a strong ability to learn new things,” and she and her husband want their children “to learn as much as possible.” Thus, the opportunity to

learn an additional language was a key deciding factor with respect to enrolling in a French immersion school.

School Ranking

School ranking was the second most frequently mentioned factor that influenced the Chinese parents' decision in school selection. The parents often considered that a school's high rating indicated a higher score in students' academic achievement, better teaching quality, and more well-equipped facilities. Julia recalled that her husband chose the French immersion school because it was "the top-ranking public school in the region." Julia echoed her husband's decision: "We Chinese parents like to select a top-ranking school for our children because it offers high-quality teaching and a positive learning environment." Mary, who selected this school after visiting several schools, explained why she changed her mind from the English program to the French immersion school:

I went to visit several schools before registering. My first impression of this school was very good. The then principal made a brief introduction and gave us a school tour, and we had a short conversation. Though there weren't too many words, the tour changed my mind. I came to see that the school lived up to its high-ranking reputation in the Windsor region.

Mary also mentioned that the key qualities that the school focused on, which were respect, kindness and perseverance, highly matched with her own values. Thus, she made up her mind that she would definitely register her son in the school. Based on the participants' responses, school ranking was also a central deciding factor when choosing a school.

Convenience

Convenience is another factor that had an influence on the parents' school selection. For example, Mia reported that she did not initially know much "about differences between various types of schools" and that she had friends who "sent their children to that school and there was school bus, which is very convenient." This is consistent with the other factor that influenced Mary's school selection. When Mary had to consider a new school upon moving, she was still working on her own Master's degree and had to avoid time conflicts between her class schedule and her son's school schedule. Hence, the transportation offered by this French immersion school was of great help to her. Similarly, Grace sent both of her children to the school located in their attendance area because it was "just convenient to put both of our kids in the same school that is close to our home." Therefore, convenience was also a central factor when selecting a school.

Perceived Difficulties with French Immersion

Though most of the parents selected the French immersion program, several of them reported that they experienced some level of difficulty with the decision. The central concern was over the language barrier. Some parents were worried about their children's adaptation to the French environment. This is consistent with the hesitation that Mary reported. When her family had to consider a new school upon moving, French immersion was not their first choice. She recalled that the adaptation period her son went through when he first came to Canada at the age of three: "He was so young, but he already learned to talk in Chinese. It was difficult for him to adjust to a strange English-speaking environment. It was not easy, but he managed to survive." Mary underlined that

she did not want her son “to go through the language barrier for a second time” and did not “want him to suffer again.” Thus, she was anxious about the transition. However, she ultimately decided to enroll him in French immersion after careful comparison among several schools.

The other concern the Chinese parents shared was that with little or no French background they would not be able to assist in their children’s French studies. In French immersion, instruction in Kindergarten and Grade One is all in French, while Grades Two to Five offer 80% of the instruction in French (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). However, among the eight participants, only Kevin and Tiffany had learned some French in school, and neither of the two were confident in their French fluency. The other six participants were not French speakers. All of the participants shared a similar feeling that the inability to tutor their children in French would inhibit the support they could provide their children. Tiffany outlined part of her frustrating experience in this regard:

It is challenging because it is impossible to help him with his studies. It’s all in French... How are we supposed to help him when we don’t read French?

Although the English instruction increases greatly after Grade Four, a considerable portion of the instruction is still in French. For example, their geography, math, and even music tests are all given in French. How can we help?

Tiffany emphasized that with little supervision from the parents, her son basically depended on himself when studying, and the outcome was not satisfying. She suggested that French immersion was “a good idea only for children who had a strong interest or were highly talented in language learning;” otherwise, it would be disappointing. Although Tiffany’s regret over selecting the French program was an extreme case, the

concern over a language barrier when assisting children with their studies was common among the participants.

Children's Adaptation

During the interview, the Chinese parents reported that their children encountered difficulties to some extent in the process of adapting to Canada's multilingual and multicultural settings. The participants were asked to describe the challenges their families experienced during the transition time and the strategies they have used to address the challenges. With respect to factors that influenced children's adaptation experience, three issues were mentioned more often than any other: natural language acquisition, ESL programs, and support from family members, friends, and teachers.

Natural Language Acquisition

For younger children, especially those who were born in Canada, as well as those who came to Canada at the age of four or five, natural language acquisition was mentioned as the most important ability that facilitated the children's adaptation. The parents believed in children's ability to naturally learn the languages. For example, Grace, who had two children in French immersion, believed that "young children's learning in new languages is surprisingly fast," and "their ability to adapt to a new environment is incredible." She went on to support her claim:

I don't find it difficult for them. At least, this is what is happening in my home...

It is amazing. [My children] speak Chinese at home, mostly watch English-language TV shows, and completely switch to French at school... I don't even know how they manage to do that, but they are ok with it and they never complain.

Even parents who had experienced challenges with their elder children's adaptation held a different attitude toward their younger children's language learning. For example, Mia mentioned that when she put her younger son in French immersion kindergarten, "he knew zero English, and neither did he know any French." She claimed that English and French "were the same to him." However, Mia was not worried. She thought, "Children learn by playing, and [her son] will learn the language by playing." She reported that the kindergarten teacher reassured her with the same standpoint, and the results proved that they were right as her son became proficient in both. Tiffany shared a similar experience with her younger son's "successful adaptation to kindergarten." She described that the little boy "really enjoyed" the new environment, even though "he did not initially understand a word."

Another participant, Kevin, outlined the negative association he believed existed between children's ability to naturally acquire language and the age at which children are first exposed to a new language environment. He emphasized that the earlier a child was exposed to a language, the closer he was to learning the language as his native language. He described children's language acquisition process with an appropriate metaphor:

Language is a kind of memory that leaves traces in your brain. It's like the marks you make on a tree. If you carve wood with a knife, you leave a mark there... The mark becomes increasingly deeper as you persist in carving. At last, it will be engraved in the bones and inscribed on the memory... The feelings you experience from an early age and the skills you obtained along the growth path are unforgettable... The depth of the marks matter.

These participants' comments demonstrate that the parents believed young children's natural language acquisition process to be different from those of adults learning a new language. Though they recognized that the process was difficult to explain, they found the outcomes to be amazing. The findings likewise demonstrate that the parents had a strong belief in young children's natural language acquisition, and their experiences provided reasonable evidence to support their beliefs. The results from the interviews indicate that children who entered new language environments prior to grade three experienced a relatively easier transition to a new language setting than older children.

ESL Program

As previously mentioned, two of the children went to an ESL program after moving to Canada with their family. Both mothers reported that the ESL program proved to be an effective means to help their children improve language fluency and prepare them for their regular classrooms. Mia recalled that her elder son's adaptation had not been that smooth, but with assistance from the ESL program, her son eventually overcame the language barriers that he struggled with. Despite the initial concern, Mia noted that this process proved advantageous as her son never felt stressed or had any negative feelings toward language learning. Her experience supported this claim:

I knew that some children only take half a year to adjust, but my son needed more time to feel comfortable in the new environment... When we came here, we didn't go straight to an ESL program. I let him blend in the regular class and hoped he could improve his English naturally. Unfortunately, by the end of the first year, things had improved slowly, and he still had difficulties with oral communication and presentation... Thus, we transferred him to the ESL program

under his teacher's advice. He made such a rapid progress with ESL lessons that he was able to get back to the regular class within a year. I think that one year in ESL had been a great help for him.

In addition to the language lessons offered by an ESL program, both mothers also mentioned that the other advantage of the program was that it was an ideal place for children to meet new friends with similar backgrounds. Wendy observed that when her elder son joined the regular classroom, the language barrier and his shyness made it difficult for him to develop a social network of friends. However, after he went to the ESL program, where "all his new classmates were all from immigrant families, the boy "made new friends immediately" and "gradually built up confidence in language learning." Wendy believed that one-year learning in an ESL program was the major reason that her son enjoyed a smooth post-immigration transition, which was also echoed by Mia's observations. Thus, the ESL program proved doubly advantageous as it facilitated language acquisition and social development.

Support from Family Members, Friends, and Teachers

Support from family members, friends, and teachers was another factor that facilitated children's adaptation to a new language environment. Some of the participants revealed the methods they used to help their children cope with adaptation challenges. For example, Mary reported that her son became resistant to learning after the first semester in French immersion. To help him, she took an understanding and supportive attitude to the situation offering him some empathic and encouraging words: "Mom understands your difficulties... It is difficult when you are in a completely strange language environment, and it's absolutely okay to be upset... However, we need to rise

up to the difficulties with full confidence.” Mary also emphasized the importance of making a strong effort to overcome challenges. She eventually found a French tutor for her son, and she believed one hour every week with the tutor was “effective and productive.”

Other parents also reported spending more time with their children during the transition period. Some sat with their children during online language courses; others took their children to the library on a regular basis. Julia remembered making flash cards to help her elder son communicate with his teachers during the initial days at the new French immersion school. She also mentioned that her elder son later provided significant assistance in preparing his younger brother for his first days of school. Julia shared her recollections of how her older son expressed concern about his younger brother: “Mom, at that time, I couldn’t understand a word. I was scared and helpless... Thus, we need to give my little brother a stronger start in school.” The participants’ responses demonstrate how support from family members can facilitate the students’ linguistic transition.

In addition to family support, Wendy reported that friendship played an important role in her son’s adjustment to the new environment.

When we first moved here, he was lonely, but things got better after he made a handful of friends in the ESL program. He developed a sense of belonging right away. It was so much easier for him with friends by his side.

Mia likewise indicated that friends and teachers contributed significantly to her elder son’s language development during his first few years in Canada. She noted that even though her elder son was “introverted” and “lacked talent for language learning,” he still managed to have “a smooth and mostly pleasant transition” with the help of his friends

and teachers. According to Mia, the teachers were “loving and never criticizing nor judgmental.” She said that “it took him at least three years to fully adjust to the life here...However, after he conquered the language barrier, he blended into the class very well and he even became more confident than before.” Based on this data, developing new friendships can help to ease the students’ transition into their new language environment.

According to the participants, it was inevitable that their children would encounter difficulties when coping with language change. They indicated, however, that with sustained efforts from both the parents and the children themselves, the difficulties were manageable and the children all successfully went through the adaptation period. Moreover, based on the interview results, none of the participants considered their children’s adaptation as a negative experience. The participants’ experiences supporting their children’s adaptation to a new language environment offers critical insights into how future immigrant families can help their children succeed in the language learning process and cope with acculturation difficulties during the post-immigration transition period.

Children’s Mandarin Learning

The interview results demonstrate that the Chinese parents were all in favor of supporting their children to learn China’s official language: Mandarin. The parents reported having tried different approaches to help their children learn Mandarin. Three approaches were mentioned most frequently: sending children to community Chinese language schools, teaching children at home, and cultural immersion. As related to the

learning outcomes, the interview also asked questions related to the children's Chinese literacy level.

Community Chinese Language Schools

With one exception, all participants had the experience of sending their children to community Chinese language schools. The participants mentioned several language schools operated by different organizations, including Windsor YMCA, the Chinese Association of Greater Windsor, and Windsor Chinese Baptist Church. While attending community language program was popular among the Chinese families, most of the parents did not consider it an effective learning approach. Two participants reported that the teaching content at the language programs was rather basic. For example, they taught simple characters, nursery rhymes, and the Chinese phonetic alphabet, pinyin. It was also mentioned that one of the programs was still using the out-of-date textbooks that were similar to the ones the parent grew up learning.

At the time of the interview, five parents had cancelled their children's community language class, principally because the parents were not satisfied with their children's learning results. For instance, Tiffany mentioned that she stopped her children's Mandarin class because she did not think they were making good progress at the community language school: "One session per week was not enough for making any big differences... Language learning requires continuous training. If it's only one session per week, the children would soon forget what they have learned in the class." In addition, not having enough time is another reason that the parents put their children's language class on hold. As Julia mentioned, her elder son had "a busy schedule packed

with swimming, piano, and Taekwondo lessons.” Thus, they had to cancel at least one class and chose his Mandarin lessons.

It is worth noting that one participant, Grace, had the experience of teaching Mandarin at one of the community language schools. During the interview, she shared her own opinion without hesitation:

By my observations, children who perform better in the Chinese class usually come from families that place great emphasis on Chinese learning. It is the parents who are making the efforts. However, I don’t blame the kids. Even I agree that it’s meaningless to learn a few characters at the community language school... When I taught how to write the characters, I knew some of the children didn’t even have the basic knowledge of Chinese language. They just followed my instructions and copied the strokes from me. It made me feel sad... I also think the textbooks we use are too boring and stringent. They are not suitable for the children who grew up [in Canada]... For example, when we ask the children to recite Chinese ancient poems, it is difficult for them to understand the basic meaning, and yet we expect them to appreciate the poems’ image and artistic conceptions. How is that possible and what is the point of doing all this? I don’t think it makes much sense.

Although Grace stated that her own opinion might be slightly more radical and not representative of her community, she emphasized that it is more important for the children to learn about China’s culture and tradition, rather than improve their literacy level. Taking all participants’ responses into account, the Chinese parents were willing to try community language schools in an effort to help their children improve Chinese

language proficiency. However, most families would give up due to discouraging learning outcomes.

Teaching Children Mandarin at Home

The study's eight participants reported different experiences related to teaching their children Mandarin at home. For younger children from kindergarten to third grade, the parents put their learning emphasis on pinyin and basic reading. For instance, Julia reported teaching her younger son pinyin at home and spent at least half an hour a day reading books with pinyin to her two children. Likewise, Wendy mentioned that, after she taught her younger son pinyin, they moved onto simple characters. By comparison, learning Mandarin for children in the upper grades was not as intense as younger children, as reported by the parents. For instance, Mia mentioned that her elder son had a solid foundation in Chinese language knowledge and was able to read in Chinese by himself; thus, she did not worry too much about his Mandarin learning. Wendy shared a similar opinion based on her elder son's proficient command of both oral and written Chinese. As identified by the participants, the one common principle that affects the learning of children from all ages was that consistent repetition and practice reinforced the language knowledge children gained. Several parents mentioned that, to form a permanent memory and maintain a steady language proficiency level, persistent study and constant practice were considered the most critical requirements.

Two of the participants mentioned that their own interest in Chinese poetry inspired them to help their children to learn Chinese characters by teaching them classic Chinese poems. Kevin stated that he collected traditional calligraphies and paintings that he enjoyed introducing to his son. He intended to help his son develop an appreciation for

Chinese culture through the beauty and cultural meaning of his collections. Mia likewise described, in detail, how she used poetry to teach her younger son Chinese:

When I teach my younger son to learn the Chinese poetry, I ask him to draw illustrations for the poems. Because he is so young, he doesn't have a deep understanding of the written words. Through illustration, he was able to form an intuitive view of the poems, and he found illustrating quite fascinating. For example, when we read "Beyond the bamboo grove, several peach trees are in bloom; The river is warming, which the ducks are first to know." [from Su Shi's Inscription on Huichong's Painting of a Spring River]; I asked him to draw ducks in a river and peach trees in blossom. He enjoyed drawing and instantly built a bond with the poem's context. Otherwise, if he felt he was forced to learn, he would resist and we wouldn't have any satisfying results.

Mia's description not only reinforces Kevin's narrative, which underscores the value and beauty of Chinese poetry, but also highlights the diversified teaching methods that the parents used at home.

Additionally, it is worth noting that Tiffany expressed particular regret for not having enough time teaching her children Mandarin at home:

I really expected them to learn Chinese... However, the reality is that it is difficult to make even small progress. They are willing to speak Chinese, but they don't want to learn the language... If they are cooperative, I will just need to outline the learning schedule. Otherwise, I have to spend all my time with them while they study. I have a demanding job, plus all the housework. It's just too much.

Tiffany thought her children, especially the elder child had the capacity for learning languages and she believed it was a pity to let it all go to waste.

The collective experiences of teaching children Mandarin at home demonstrate how these parents were devoted to improving their children's Chinese literacy level. When time and energy allowed, the parents were willing to make an effort to help their children practice Chinese.

Cultural Immersion

According to the participants, instilling cultural knowledge into the children's daily life was another crucial aspect in children's language learning. Cultural immersion was demonstrated as the participants' most preferred approach for their children to learn Mandarin. The commonly mentioned cultural immersion resources included cultural-based products, community cultural events, and cultural immersion trips.

When it comes to various cultural products, Chinese TV shows and movies were the most frequently mentioned resources that parents used to supplement their children's Chinese learning. Most parents consider watching TV in Chinese a convenient and effective way to immerse their children in Chinese culture and expose them to the language spoken by the locals, such as proverbs and idioms. Kevin reported that Chinese TV shows were of significant help in his son's Chinese learning journey:

My son has been following the Chinese TV shows since an early age. He is fond of different genres of popular TV series. He absorbs lots of information from the shows and his [Chinese] listening comprehension improves along the way.

Some parents also suggested that, when advocating for Chinese TV shows with the intention to help their children learn Chinese, it is important to select programs wisely

because some programs are not appropriate for beginner language learners. As underlined by Grace, “some of the costume dramas were too difficult for the children to follow because they lacked the background knowledge of China’s history.”

Community cultural events are mentioned by several participants as being beneficial for children to experience linguistic immersion and build connection with the culture. For example, Emma stated that there was no need to deliberately create a language learning atmosphere because the schools organize various events to promote multicultural heritages. She mentioned that her family attended the Spring Festival celebration hosted by her son’s school and thought the event provided a wonderful opportunity for all the children to learn about the Eastern culture. Although one parent complained that there were not many community activities that promote China’s traditional culture in Windsor, other parents stated that they seized every opportunity to take their children to culture events organized by schools and communities. Three parents also stated that they took their children back to China on a regular basis for cultural immersion. For example, Grace took her two children back to China once a year when they were both in elementary school. During the summer vacation, they would spend the two months in China and travel around the country in order to become familiar with people speaking various dialects from different parts of China. Both parents claimed that trips to China would boost their children’s Chinese proficiency within a short period of time.

Immersion in Chinese culture and native language settings was claimed by the parents as most effective for language learning because it provided the children with a more practical and intuitive understanding of the language. The participants’ shared

responses demonstrated the remarkable efficiency that cultural immersion exerts in facilitating children's language learning.

Children's Chinese Literacy Level

When asked about the result of children's Chinese language learning, all participants were satisfied with their children's oral communication ability. The parents were confident that their children had achieved functional fluency in oral Chinese and had basic understanding and appreciation for the Chinese culture. Among the thirteen children, only two young ones demonstrated a unique issue with Chinese speaking. Because they had become accustomed to speaking English, their Chinese word order and vocabulary sometimes came across as awkward or unclear. The other children reportedly spoke Chinese with close to native fluency and had the ability to hold conversations about abstract concepts. As reported by one of the mothers, "the only obstacle that was hindering [her] child from developing a deeper communication was the inadequate background knowledge due to his younger age, but not his language proficiency." Most of the participants were also proud of their children's native Mandarin pronunciation. For example, Mia mentioned that some assumed her children were born and raised in China based on their Mandarin accent. Two of the participants stated that, besides Mandarin, their children were able to speak dialects from each of their hometowns.

However, according to the participants, their children's Chinese reading and writing literacy levels were not equally developed compared with their oral Chinese. The three children who came to Canada after age ten were the only ones who were reported as being able to read in Chinese. The parents claimed that these three children were able to maintain their Chinese reading ability because they received primary education in China

during the early grades and had developed fundamental knowledge and comprehensive ability of Chinese. One parent, Tiffany, also mentioned that her elder son's Chinese reading was regressing due to a lack of practice. The other children, who came to Canada at a younger age or were born in Canada, were reported as learning to read Chinese with the help of pinyin. However, the learning outcomes were not encouraging due to slow progress. For instance, Kevin said that his son "was like the illiterate population who spoke fluent Chinese but knew neither how to read nor write." Mary reported that, after learning pinyin, her son was able to spell the Chinese words by blending the sounds. However, his pronunciation would come out in a strange way. Mary said, "It's nothing like his normal speech. He sounds like a foreigner who tries to learn Chinese as a second language... However, when he speaks normally, he is just like native speakers." When it comes to writing ability, the three children who were able to read in Chinese also maintained their writing habits but would only write in Chinese on a few occasions. The other children learnt to write either with their parents or in the community language schools. However, as reported, they primarily enjoyed the process of "painting, instead of writing the characters."

The interview findings revealed that it was challenging to develop the children's literacy level due to the difficulty associated with learning Chinese characters. The parents reported two major difficulties: a lack of systematic training and a lack of an effective learning environment. Firstly, because most of the children did not have the chance to follow a systematic learning course, the Chinese characters and vocabulary were not taught under a comprehensive teaching plan. As previously mentioned, home schooling and community language teaching were primarily focused on achieving basic

learning goals, such as pinyin and simple characters. Thus, developing a higher literacy level was regarded as difficult to achieve considering the learning context. Secondly, living in Canada, the children did not have significant opportunity to get familiarized with the Chinese characters. As one of the mothers claimed, “If they go outside, they [didn’t] always see the characters; and even at home, there [were] not enough Chinese learning materials.” As a consequence, both the lack of visual immersion and an appropriate learning environment weakened the children’s instinctive feel for the Chinese characters and undermined their learning outcomes. Given such circumstances, it was demanding for the children to develop a high Chinese literacy level. Moreover, such a high literacy level was not expected by the parents. One parent’s statement clarified her satisfaction over the children’s Chinese literacy level:

I am pleased with my children’s Chinese level because I’ve already lowered the standards for them. I am not trying to compare them with children from China... For daily communication and exchange of ideas, they are totally okay, but they are far yet from reaching the point of debating or writing professionally in Chinese.

From the interview, it was concluded that the children’s oral Chinese was sufficient to meet the parents’ expectations in the language’s functional use. Only a few occasions occurred when the children tried to express themselves at a deeper level and were not eloquent enough to describe their ideas and thoughts. As for Chinese reading and writing, only children who came to Canada after age eight were able to maintain these abilities. The younger children were constantly learning the language with a relatively slow progress. Alternately, parents were not discouraged by their children’s

Chinese literacy level and expressed understanding of the difficulties of upgrading to a higher level. Several parents anticipated that, as the children grew older, they would have an increasing amount of workload required for study, which might leave them with limited time to learn Chinese. Although the parents expressed their regret, they were generally satisfied with the status quo and did not require their children to accomplish much in Chinese literacy.

Parents' Perceptions of Language Learning

With regard to perceptions about the children's language learning and language preference, the participants demonstrated different but intertwined views toward different languages. While the Chinese language was more associated with social and cultural identity, English and French languages were considered more for their practical use in facilitating communication in both living and working environments. Apart from the two standpoints, several parents also mentioned that language served as the cultural foundation, they hoped to introduce a new culture to their children by way of learning a new language.

Importance of Learning Chinese

When asked about why learning Chinese is important for their children, most parents associated the language as an important social and cultural marker of identity. The Chinese language was considered as a symbol of China's glorious history and blooming civilization. Several parents expressed their sense of pride of being Chinese and speaking the language. Moreover, they wanted to create a sense of historical continuity by passing the language on to the next generation. This is illuminated by Grace's thoughts on cultural identity and language attitudes:

It's quite simple and does not involve any profound ideal. Both of my children were born in Canada, but they are the descendants of Chinese forebears. I told them, no matter where you were born or where you live, you are Chinese, the descendant of Yan and Huang emperors. Thus, I want them to learn more about the environment that their parents grew up in and their parents' personal past. I also want them to know more about the Chinese stories and the culture...

Although we live in Canada, we maintain a traditional Chinese way of life, and I don't want the traditions to be lost from my family's culture and our history.

Grace's statement also reveals something else that parents anticipated regarding their children's Chinese language learning: developing a deeper appreciation for the Chinese culture. The parents expected their children to discover the affective and aesthetic values in Chinese culture through the lens of language. Wendy expressed her endorsement in this opinion with a fine metaphor: "I told my children that the Chinese language is like a key to the Chinese cultural treasure. I ask my children to improve their Chinese language knowledge to open the treasure chest." Tiffany mentioned her own appreciation for the ancient culture and her expectation for children in a similar way:

Chinese is such a special language. The beauty of those classic poems comes out of their words, let alone China's rich and long history... I want my children to learn to read and write those beautiful poems, and to know more about China's history. It will be of great help for them to set up the correct and positive values for their life.

The parents likewise expressed that they expected their children to be able to distinguish the significant cultural difference between Canada and China and to comprehend things through a wider cultural lens.

Additionally, one mother, Mia, mentioned that speaking Chinese might provide her children with another available choice in career development. She stated that, “as China develops at a rapid pace and plays an irreplaceable role in the global economy, Chinese language competence might be a major advantage if, in the future, the children go back to China and start a career there.” She stretched her anticipation by further stating that “it would still be beneficial for them if they apply for jobs and positions with Chinese companies in North America.”

Based on interview results, the participants primarily considered that developing their children’s Chinese language skills played an essential role in building their Chinese ethnic identity. They associated Chinese language fluency with a symbol of the Chinese cultural identity within Canada’s multicultural society. In addition, some parents also perceived the Chinese language as beneficial in fostering cultural sensitivity and improving future career prospects.

Experience with French Learning

The majority of participants, whether their children were in an English or a French immersion program school, reported that their children’s French learning experience was similar to learning an additional foreign language. Most of the parents anticipated that their children would develop a deeper appreciation for the French culture and learning French would enhance their perspectives of multiculturalism and cultural

differences. For example, Mary expressed her anticipation with her son's French learning:

I don't have very high expectations for his French. It's just like learning a second foreign language... As long as he can speak some French, that is good. It's like opening another window in the world. By learning the language, he would be able to appreciate some French songs, read some French books, and get to know the French people's life. That's good enough... I hope he has some fun learning French, and I hope it enriches his life.

Some parents also indicated the functional benefit of speaking French. They implied that language serves as a tool that supports thinking and communication. Kevin's statement sufficiently interpreted the parents' understanding of the practical use of French language in Canada:

I cannot predict the future, but language is like a tool. It always helps that one develops the usage of one more tool. Actually the more, the better. If [my son] he goes to France someday, or meets some French-speaker at work, it would be much more convenient for him if he speaks French. If he goes to China and meets Chinese people, then speaking Chinese would help him avoid lots of problems...

Language is a skill, and having multi-skills only makes things more convenient.

Several parents specified that a higher level of French competency would be advantageous when applying for a job, particularly the bilingual positions in the Government of Canada. For instance, Mia thought:

It would definitely be helpful for [her] children to speak both French and English because Canada itself is a bilingual country... If you want to be a teacher or work

in a government department, bilingual capability is obviously the icing on the cake.

In contrast, parents like Tiffany perceived the advantages of speaking French as relatively small because “the chance of landing one of those government jobs [were] quite slim.”

In addition, two parents mentioned that they had low expectations in French primarily because they believed that there was limit in the children’s capabilities. Emma, who sent her son to an English program school, highlighted her children’s limited language learning ability. She mentioned concerns associated with children’s language selection during the interview:

Every child has their own limitation. For example, my son is not that talented in language learning, and we think it is unrealistic for him to master all the three languages. Thus as parents, we need to help him make the choice by identifying the focus of his language learning... Like most Chinese families [in Canada], we tend to put the emphasis on the language that is essential for him to fulfill the survival needs, which is English in this case. As for French and Chinese, it is good to foster an interest in these languages, but they are just not the priority.

Tiffany echoed Emma’s statement on the children’s limited capability, saying that “it was difficult enough to master one language, let alone all the three.” Tiffany similarly restated that she simply expected her children to speak some French, and that to be excellent in all languages was “hardly possible and was also unnecessary.”

The interview results showed that most of the Chinese parents did not expect their children to achieve a higher level of French proficiency. Instead, the parents commonly

preferred their children to use French learning as a means for knowledge enrichment and an entry point into a different culture.

Expectations in the Practical Use of English

The parents' motivations to have their children master English were primarily based on the basic survival needs for making a living in North America. The parents all expected their children to put efforts into learning English and to achieve a level equivalent to that of an educated native speaker. Julia outlined her expectation of her children's English fluency:

First, they need to achieve barrier-free communication to be able to articulate in an effective and proficient manner. They also have to be able to express their ideas and subtle emotions in adequate and precise words. They need to reach native-like fluency in both personal and professional contexts.

Apart from considering English as a means for expression and communication, the parents also stressed the importance of English fluency on an individual's occupational advancement. Mary's description exemplified the parents' understanding on the substantial influence of their children's English level:

For my child, I don't want learning to be the only purpose of learning a language. It is more important to have learning linked with the practical use in daily life... [English] language proficiency makes an essential contribution to a person's career development. The most brilliant professionals are those who have excellent skills in both written and verbal communication. Even for students from STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] majors, effective

communication and excellent paperwork are the two skills that matter most...

Otherwise, it is impossible to achieve a leading position in any industry.

It is particularly worth mentioning that Mia's elder son was involved in an online English teaching program at the time of the interview. He joined the program several months prior to her interview to help children from China to practice oral English. With each learner, he would chat over some specific topics during the first few sessions to break the ice, and they would enjoy more free conversations in the following sessions. Mia observed that her son was "quite talkative" in all the sessions, whether with younger children or English learners at college level. Mia attributed her son's articulation to his English proficiency and public speaking skills. She likewise pointed out that he enjoyed participating in the program because he made money from it.

The parents' viewpoints on the practical application of English were similar to the ones they had on French, with the hope they would assist the learning of other subjects and facilitate future career advancement. However, unlike the French learning, the parents put particular emphasis on written English. Several parents reported their special concern regarding their children's English writing skills. For example, Julia expressed that she found writing an issue of concern for her two sons. She thought that, "as a result of choosing Chinese as the home language, [her] children lacked a full immersion in English. She reported noticing that it had "some negative impact in the children's English competency, especially the writing abilities." Mary likewise mentioned that, compared with the pleasing speaking and reading skills, her son seemed to be weakest at writing. To help him work on English writing, Mary reported working with him when he analyzed specific passages in detail and practiced writing essays.

As demonstrated by the interview results, the participants perceived English as an essential ingredient in surviving the living environment in North America. All participants required their children to achieve native-like English proficiency and highlighted the importance of being excellent in written English.

Family Communication and Relationships

The findings on the participants' satisfaction over family communication and relationships were quite positive overall. The participants reported that Chinese was the language spoken mostly frequently in the home and that the communication they had with their children was open and smooth in general. Most of the parents also stated that they were confident supporting their children's mental growth and well-being through stable, loving, and respectful family relationships.

Chinese as the Home Language

When asked about the primary language that was spoken for everyday interactions with their children, all of the eight participants reported using Chinese as the home language. While the majority of the parents suggested that it was a natural selection, three of them admitted that they made speaking Chinese a mandatory requirement at home. Julia demanded that her children "switch to Chinese the moment they step into the house." She explained that she set the rule because she was worried that if she did not require her children "to use Chinese at home, they would soon forget the language." This is consistent with Emma's family situation. The other participant, Wendy, did not mention setting clear rules in the same way, but she stated that if her children spoke English at home, she would immediately "correct them."

With regard to how the children felt about speaking Chinese at home, most participants reported that their children accepted it naturally without any problem. Emma believed that, because “children have strong adaptability” and “are naturally dependent on parents,” they would get used to speaking Chinese at home as long as the parents “stayed consistent” with the approach. Julia likewise considered it to be natural to speak Chinese at home because “the children were accustomed to it since they were toddlers” and “never disagreed with it.” Among the eight participants, Mary and Tiffany indicated that their children were willing to communicate with them more in Chinese than English. Mary mentioned when she tried to have an English conversation with her son, he would “talk back in English”; however, Mary did not explain why her son chose to converse in Chinese more often. She thought this was “strange” because “in most Chinese homes, it was the other way around.” Similarly, Tiffany reported that Chinese was her children’s preference when communicating with her and her husband. She said that her children preferred communicating with them in Chinese because: “They think our English is not native because of our accent.” Another participant, Kevin also mentioned his consideration of parents’ English accent, but from a different angle:

I found that some [Chinese] parents speak English with their children as a means to help them better integrate with Canadian culture. However, in this case, children raised up in an English environment will definitely lose the Chinese language. I would not be proud of that. I even think it would only make things worse. First of all, these parents came to Canada by immigration, and English is not their first language... Speaking English with an accent only misleads the children. Secondly, if Chinese is not even used within the family, the traditional

culture will become foreign to the children... Thus, I think it is better that our children be immersed in native English when they are outside and speak our first language [Chinese] at home.

Kevin's statement corresponds with that of most of the participants. Based on the interview findings, the Chinese parents all preferred to use Chinese as the primary language in their homes, and, as stated by the parents, the children were all comfortable with the arrangement.

Switching Between Languages

Apart from using Chinese as the home language, a natural shifting between the three languages was also commonly mentioned by the participants. According to the parents' reports, all thirteen children spoke fluent Mandarin. In addition, three children were reported as being able to speak other Chinese dialects. The parents observed that the children were able to switch back and forth across different languages. In environments where there was more than one language needed, the children were able to switch effortlessly and instantly from one language to another, and the switching could be a word, phrase, or entire sentence. Grace shared her observations:

Basically, they are using the three languages concurrently. Classroom communication was primarily French in the early grades [as they were in French immersion school]. The home language for them is Chinese. Although I never require them to do so, they do feel most comfortable speaking Chinese with me. Between the siblings and when playing with their own friends, English is still the common language... For example, when we have children from an English-speaking family over to play at our house, my children would play with them in

English but immediately switch to Chinese when they turn over to talk to me. I don't think I have any problem with communicating in English, but they would just switch their language channel. They might want to look after my culture and my emotions... They have been using all three languages since an early age. It is special. Being Chinese [in Canada] is special itself.

Julia echoed Grace's statement and gave an explanation of why English was more popular in children's peer-to-peer communication. She drew on her children's experience: "when playing with their peers, my children would switch to English because their playmates might not share a Chinese background or their Chinese might not be fluent enough to allow them communicate freely in the language." Julia's statement correspondingly matches other participants' observations on children's communication with peers. Thus, based on the parents' collective responses, it seems that the children are comfortable with and able to shift between multiple languages.

Family Relationships

During the interviews, all participants reported having healthy and loving familial relationships with only few unpleasant incidents mentioned. Most participants stated that they have open and honest conversations with their children. However, given that the data are self reported, it is possible that merits of these conversations could have been overstated. The interview findings do not suggest that language constitutes any obstacles in family communication. The participants commonly mentioned that the languages that were used to communicate did not have a significant impact on the quality of parent-child communication. In contrast, open and respectful interaction between parents and children was considered as the foundation for loving and caring relationships. For example, Grace

stated that the communication she had with her children was stable and sufficient, and she enjoyed the harmonious interaction she had with her children. In addition, she believed that her children's Chinese fluency was built upon their acceptance of Chinese culture and the appreciation for the parents' cultural background. Grace said, "My children speak fluent Chinese because of the culture we instill in our daily conversation and the love and respect they have for us, not because any stress is put on them."

Similarly, Mary was also proud of the open and honest conversations she had with her son. She reported that "the best thing is that my son can share everything with me. Whether he is happy or upset, he would not hide anything from me." When asked about whether she preferred a certain language to achieve better communication quality, Mary stated that English or Chinese did not make a big difference:

We mostly use Chinese to communicate because [my son] has built a comprehensive understanding of Chinese. Even abstract concepts, such as math problems, he can fully understand without any issue... I do talk to him in English from time to time, not because he has any difficulties in understanding Chinese, but because I want to use the opportunity to practice my oral English.

Some participants also mentioned the downside of the communication with their children. For instance, Mary complained that sometimes her son could not fully understand the abstract concept she tried to deliver, "I wanted to offer him some advice from an adult's point of view, especially ideas to help with his study... However, sometimes he just could not get my point. I understand it was hard for him, especially when he had to follow my instructions. When he is obedient, it is much easier. Because he will soon find my advice effective and he will see an improvement. However, it's a

struggle when he refuses to follow my suggestions. That way we would have a difficult time because we resist each other... Fortunately, as he grows up, he begins to understand me better..." Two other participants mentioned regretting not having enough interaction and communication with their children because of a busy work and life schedule. Wendy highlighted that the lack of communication was particularly outstanding between her and her elder son. She said, "In retrospect, I didn't spend enough quality time with him. I was focused too much on my work. My younger son also kept me occupied... The big brother was rather rebellious at that time. He wasn't listening to me and deliberately acted against me." Wendy stated that later the situation changed for better after she invited her sons to join her in Bible study. She believed that their religious belief helped them survive the family's hard time and brought the whole family even closer than before.

To conclude, most of the participants were pleased with the quality of their family communication and were able to maintain a close relationship with their children. The parents perceived that the quality of communication is not directly related to the use of any certain language or language proficiency. In contrast, open and positive communication is believed to play an important role in encouraging loving and respectful family relationships.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

With the growing number of Chinese immigrant children entering Canadian schools, it is increasingly important to meet their language needs and the language expectations of their families. The current study has identified several trends; however, it is critical to understand the implications of these findings, particularly with respect to how they could shape the implementation of heritage language programs and the delivery of post-immigration settlement services. In order to develop implications, it is important to re-examine the current study's research questions, assess the implications of the finding and their limitations, and identify avenues for future research.

Revisiting the Research Questions

At the outset of the current study, three questions were developed to guide the research. The first considered Chinese immigrant parents' perspectives of their children's language learning. The second sought to examine the major challenges that Chinese immigrant parents encounter with respect to their children's language learning. The third and final question explored how parental language attitudes influence parent-child relationships.

Perspectives on Language Learning

The current study demonstrates Chinese immigrant parents' varying but consistent perspectives of their children's language learning. All participants reported being actively engaged in their children's language education. The data provide insights into the factors that motivate parental involvement, the ways through which the parents chose to become involved, and the outcomes of parental involvement. The findings endorse Walker et al.'s (2005) theoretical model of parental involvement, which

organizes the major psychological factors that influence parental involvement into three categories: parents' motivational beliefs, parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others, and parents' perceived life context.

Parents' Motivational Beliefs

Parents' motivational beliefs consist of parental self-efficacy and parental role construction. All participants demonstrated supportive attitudes toward assisting their children's language education. This indicates that the parents were confident that their children would achieve expected outcomes if both the parents and the children were committed to the language learning. Also, the participants' own educational experiences and their cultural backgrounds appeared to have significant influence on their parenting styles and educational concepts. Most of the participants considered education as a factor that enables career success and upward mobility; thus, they had a preference for academically high-ranking schools and schools that provide opportunities for trilingual studies. The influences that parents' original cultural values have on their involvement in children's education has been repeatedly demonstrated in studies related to Chinese immigrants (Ho, 2014; Li, 2001; Li, 2009). For instance, Li (2001) states that the Chinese parents' expectations for their children stem from Chinese tradition and are stimulated by the need to accommodate the Canadian socio-cultural context. By comparison, the one participant who attended both secondary school and university in Canada expressed less anxiety towards his child's school and language selection.

Parents' Perceptions of Invitations for Involvement from Others

Parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others include three main sources: schools, teachers, and children. Because the current study focuses on the

relations between parents and children, specific invitations from schools and teachers were not explored in detail. The data provide evidence primarily on the invitations that parents received from their children. All participants were vigilant in sensing their children's difficulties in learning and were willing to take action in response to their children's needs. The findings again confirmed the significance of parents' perceptions of invitation for involvement from their children. These invitations not only helped the parents to identify the difficulties their children had with their studies but also facilitated parent-child communications.

Parents' Perceived Life Context

The last determining factor of parental involvement is parents' perceived life context, which includes skills, knowledge, time, and energy. The participants reported several approaches that were used to engage in their children's language studies. With regard to the learning of Canada's official languages, the parents carefully chose between schools with different language programs, took their time developing good reading and learning habits, and spent money hiring tutors to assist their children's studies. With regard to Chinese heritage language learning, the parents focused more on fostering cultural immersion learning environments and sending their children to community language schools. In contrast to the parent's high passion for participation, several parents reported three factors impeded their involvement in children's language learning: inadequate language knowledge, limited time, and limited energy. These findings are in line with Zhong and Zhou's (2011) investigation, which highlights the inconsistency between Chinese immigrant parents' high levels of commitment and low levels of action in their children's education.

Challenges for Chinese Immigrant Parents and Children's Language Learning

The findings reveal that Chinese immigrant parents have encountered varying difficulties in their children's language learning. There were three major challenges identified in the participants' responses: perseverance in Chinese language learning, post-immigration language transition, and, for some children, adapting to the French immersion program.

Perseverance in Chinese Language Learning

All participants were in favor of promoting their Chinese heritage language among their children. While most of the participants agreed that Chinese language played an essential role in preserving cultural identity, emphasis was put onto the acquisition of oral Chinese language skills. The participants reported that it was difficult to keep their children constantly motivated in learning the Chinese language. As there was no ideal solution to the problem, most participants lowered their expectations of their children's Chinese learning as a means to cope with the reality and only a few participants anticipated that their children would maintain a certain level of Chinese literacy.

Post-Immigration Language Transition

Three participants perceived that language transition presented some level of difficulties in their children's post-immigration adaptation. Fortunately, all children were reported passing through the transition successfully with help from family, teachers, and friends. The participants all believed that the level of English language proficiency was a necessity for future economic security in North America because English proficiency is critical to future career development and success.

Adapting to the French Immersion

Apart from a language's practical use, the participants who put their children into French learning expected their children to enjoy a language-culture interaction in learning an additional language. In the interview, one participant particularly reported that her son had been struggling in early French immersion learning, so they transferred to another English school after Grade One. The participant believed that switching to the English-track school took significant pressure off the child.

Parental Language Attitudes and Parent-Child Relationships

The study offers critical insights into family communication and intra-family relations. Some previous studies showed that diverging language proficiencies in English and Chinese between children and parents respectively may inhibit the development of harmonious relationships and children's development (Crane et al., 2005; Tseng & Fuligni, 2000; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). However, this was not consistent with the current study's findings. Rather than language proficiency, the participants agreed that open and honest communication helped family members come to an understanding and form tighter bonds, which was considered the basis for developing healthy familial relationships. According to the theoretical framework of family communication patterns (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990), the communication patterns reported by the participants are more conversation orientated than conformity orientated. This is consistent with the findings offered by Zhang (2007), whose research suggests family communication patterns play an essential role in children's socialization processes. In addition, the participants believed that allowing different perspectives from each family member and opening the lines of communication during disagreements played a vital role in solving familial conflicts and supporting

children's overall growth. This is likewise in line with the established link between communication patterns and satisfaction with family relationships (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Zhang, 2007).

Practical Implications

The current study enhances the general understanding of Chinese immigrant parents' attitudes toward their children's language learning and offers insights into how children's language preference affects family communication and relationships. These findings highlight the need for several stakeholders—specifically Chinese immigrant parents, community language schools, school boards, and settlement organizations—to collaborate and support each other in building a positive learning environment. This learning environment should ideally serve two functions: It should facilitate the children's language learning, and it should ease their adaptation to Canada's mainstream society. To this end, there are several implications for each stakeholder. With respect to Chinese parents, they should consider balancing the learning of different languages with improving the quality of communication to foster healthier familial relationships. In addition, community Chinese language schools should refine their teaching plan to share the parents' burden of promoting heritage Chinese language. Lastly, local school boards and settlement service provider organizations should develop more effective initiatives to assist newly immigrated Chinese children to ensure a smoother integration and facilitate their overall development.

Data collected from the interviews suggest that Chinese immigrant parents are often actively involved in children's language learning, and that they hold diverse and complex attitudes towards children's learning of different languages. It is therefore vital

for the parents to find a balance between the learning of multiple languages as the interview findings reveal that it is difficult for some children to keep up with trilingual learning. When the children signal that they are struggling with language learning, parents should take timely action to ease their children's difficulties. For instance, for younger children who could not keep up with French immersion, the parents should consider transferring them to an English program school. Alternatively, when children immigrate at an older age, parents should work with teachers and settlement workers to offer the children the opportunity to receive support from an ESL program. With regard to Chinese heritage language learning, the study indicates that participation in community cultural events and cultural immersion trips are beneficial for the children's Chinese language learning; thus, it is recommended that parents take their children to more culture-related events and encourage their children to learn more about China's history and culture. With regard to family communication and relationships, the findings suggest that the language which is chosen for communication between family members does not have significant influence on the quality of family communication. Thus, the parents should focus more on improving effective family communication by engaging in meaningful conversations with their children and encouraging the children to communicate their opinions and feelings in a clear and direct manner.

The study likewise demonstrates that the community Chinese language schools should take a more active and effective role in promoting Chinese heritage language among immigrant children. At the time of the current research, there were a variety of community Chinese language programs offered by different organizations in the Windsor region. However, the participants suggested that low frequency of classes and ineffective

course syllabus have led to the common disappointing results in learning outcomes. Therefore, the schools should adjust the program settings to provide systematic and continuous learning courses that ensure sustainable and manageable learning goals. For example, the programs should develop long-term teaching strategies and deliver courses in consecutive sessions to ensure sustainable learning, improve learning outcomes, and prevent the children losing interest and abandoning the program. The course syllabus should likewise be tailored to the needs of children at different learning levels. Alternatively, the programs could increase course density or organize outside-the-classroom learning groups to encourage the children to use the Chinese language more frequently and engage in culture-immersed community activities. These are the vital actions that community Chinese language schools could take to facilitate children heritage language learning and promote Chinese traditional culture.

Lastly, local school boards and settlement service provider organizations are central in helping immigrant children to integrate into Canadian mainstream society. Local school boards should continue to identify the barriers immigrant children encounter in language transition and implement strategies to help them overcome these barriers and enhance their adaptation process. For instance, the school boards should collaborate with settlement workers to conduct joint workshops to offer information about local educational climate and school culture. Parents should also be invited to attend these workshops so that they can have more guidance in how to assist their children during their post-immigrant transition. In addition, the findings of the study recommend that older children who come to Canada after the age of eight enroll in an ESL program. In the interviews, two participants revealed that attending an ESL program provided

significant help during their children's language transition by building up their confidence in English learning and enhancing their English proficiency level. Further, participation in ESL programs and activities organized by the settlement service providers enabled the immigrant children to become familiar with local learning environments and build social networks with peers from similar backgrounds. These experiences enhanced both the children's English language competence and their integration into Canadian learning environment. Alternately, the school boards and settlement organizations could also organize more events that enable the immigrant children to collaborate with their local peers and encourage children from both backgrounds to maintain friendships and adopt more inclusive approaches in their studies. There are three additional practices that can be crucial to Chinese immigrant children's adaptation and integration: taking the initiative in conversations, demonstrating a willingness to converse with local peers, and building up social networks. These are important because they can increase the children's sense of belonging in the new environment and further motivate their language learning.

Limitations of the Study

There are three potential limitations pertaining to this small-scale research: (1) the social-distancing practices in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted the one-on-one interviews to electronic interviews; (2) the potential social desirability bias, which relates to the disadvantages of using self-reported data; and (3) the exclusion of Cantonese speakers, which means the findings may be more applicable to Canada's Mandarin-speaking population and not Canada's entire Chinese-heritage population.

First, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the data were collected via video and audio meetings using telephone and WeChat. Conducting research online allows the researcher to minimize the impact of COVID-19; however, the social distancing also posed a negative impact on data collection. For example, the online interactions were more impersonal and thus made it more difficult for the researcher to build rapport and develop mutual trust with the participants. In addition, the nature of audio meetings prevented the researcher from recording the participants' facial expressions and body language. Even with the use of video meeting and field notes, the quality of obtained information was still limited.

Second, as a result of using semi-structured interviews as the sole instrument for data collection, the study relies exclusively on the self-reported data. Although the researcher made an effort to promote truthful responses, potential social desirability bias might still be present when the participants report on their own experience. For instance, the participants might be unconsciously influenced by social desirability and thus may have provided answers that were more likely to be socially preferred. However, the researcher made every attempt to carefully phrase the interview questions to reduce the likelihood that participants would answer questions in a way that would produce a right or desirable answer.

Lastly, the participants recruited for the current study were all native Mandarin speakers. Although five among the eight participants speak some other Chinese dialects, none of them was a native Cantonese speaker. However, Cantonese is generally considered an influential Chinese dialect apart from the official language of Mandarin, and in North America, there is a large number of Chinese immigrants who speak

Cantonese as their primary language (Chan, 2017; Li, 2018). In Canada specifically, the data from 2016 Census of Population show that nearly 600,000 immigrants speak Cantonese as their mother tongue, ranking right after the most-reported immigrant mother tongue – Mandarin (Statistics Canada, 2019b). Therefore, the absence of native Cantonese speakers' insights results in potential gaps in the research findings. Future research should seek to expand data collection to include Cantonese speakers' experiences so as to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being explored.

Nonetheless, even with the above-mentioned limitations, the current study still provides detailed insights on the current status of parental language attitudes among Chinese immigrant families in Canada.

Future Research

Several possibilities for future research arose from summarizing the data of the current study. Specifically, research should include the experiences of Cantonese families to provide a more comprehensive understanding of families speaking dialects other than Mandarin. Further research should also look into gender-related differences in children's language transition and adaptation process. Finally, longitudinal studies should be conducted to provide insights into immigrant children's language development over time.

Experiences of Cantonese-speaking Families

As illustrated in the limitation section, the current study did not recruit any native Cantonese speakers. Future research might use a qualitative approach that features one-on-one interview and incorporates the perceptions of parents from Cantonese families. Though, in language transition, Cantonese-speaking Chinese children share a lot of

similarities with their Mandarin-speaking peers, parents from native Cantonese speaking families might hold different perceptions of their children's heritage language learning. It is therefore important to explore Cantonese speakers' experiences so as to determine how immigrant children's language learning and transition differ across families speaking different Chinese dialects. To have a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese immigrant parents' perceptions on their children's language learning, it is critical to incorporate Cantonese speakers' experiences in future studies.

Gender Difference in Language Transition

Among the thirteen children involved in the current study, twelve of them were coincidentally boys. Thus, the findings produced were predominantly based on the experiences from families with male children. As studies have identified gender as a variable that affects children's language use and acquisition (Burman, et al., 2008; Ehrlich, 1997; Zeynali, 2012), future research might explore the gender-related differences on immigrant children's language learning. As there is limited data on this at present, such research might include exploratory qualitative models that seek to establish potential trends. Such research could provide better understanding on the differences between genders in the overall language transition process and the use of specific language learning strategies among the population of immigrant children.

Longitudinal Study

Due to time limitations and its specific purpose, the current research only interviewed the participants once; therefore, the data only provide insights into the participants' experiences in the current contexts. Because acculturation is an on-going and perpetually changing process, it is critical to perform a longitudinal study that

follows the children's language transition and language development over time. Therefore, future research should include longitudinal models to collect data and investigate whether parents' language perceptions change as they and their children acclimate to their new cultural setting over time. It could also identify the impact that different attitudes and approaches have on children in adulthood with respect to heritage culture retention, professional opportunities, and other developmental outcomes. This could provide a better understanding of immigrant children's language transition and its influence on family relationships over a period of time.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Chinese Immigrant Parents, Their Children's Language Learning, and Parent-Child Relationships

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Sudan Yao, a Master candidate, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. Sudan is conducting this study for her master thesis under the supervision of Dr. Zuochen Zhang.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact Sudan Yao at yao125@uwindsor.ca or Dr. Zuochen Zhang at zuochen@uwindsor.ca

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore parental language attitudes among Chinese immigrant families and to understand how parents' language attitudes influence the quality of familial relationships. This can be achieved by identifying the major factors that affect immigrant parents' language attitudes and examining how parental attitudes influence their children's language engagements. Furthermore, this study seeks to examine how parental language attitudes and familial relations interact, specifically among Chinese immigrant families in the context of Canadian culture.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview which will last approximately 50 minutes. With the current recommendation of social distancing in relation to COVID-19 pandemic, the one-on-one interviews will be held via telephone, or on-line platforms, such as WeChat. The participants may choose a suitable platform that they have access to. The participants will also be provided with the option to choose audio or video meeting whichever they feel comfortable to share information. The interviews will be arranged at a time according to the convenience of each participant.

Before conducting the interviews, the researcher will first obtain verbal consent from her participants. The researcher will go through the consent forms with the participant, explain the study and provide all pertinent information. During the interview, the researcher will use an interview guide to keep the interview on track and help the participants stay focus on the questions. In the beginning of the interview, a few questions will be asked to help break the ice and to get to know the participant's family background. Then, three sets of open-ended questions will be asked to explore the participant's attitudes towards their children's language learning, involvement in their children's language learning, and parent-child relationships.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

In general, there are no significant risks or discomforts in participating in this study. However, during the interview, there is a possibility that some of the questions may provoke participants to recall unpleasant experience. This should be a minimal risk as the participants will be told to skip any questions they feel uncomfortable to answer.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no direct benefits from participating in this study. However, the study provides the participants an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences in assisting their children navigating linguistic diversity. It helps the participants develop a deeper understanding of their children's language learning experience in a multilingual country. The findings of the study will be informative for educators to develop interventions or programs that facilitate parental involvement and fluid parent-school communication with regard to students'

language learning and their overall development. The study will also provide insights that may potentially enhance the community's language services and thus better facilitate immigrant children's cultural integration.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

Each of the participant will be given a \$20 Tim Hortons' E-gift card as compensation for their time. If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study before the interview starts, the compensation will not be offered. However, if a participant decides to withdraw after the interview starts, the compensation will still be offered.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

The investigator will stay vigilant to protect the participants' confidentiality and privacy. Personal information such as names will be excluded when recoding the data. Pseudonyms will be used in the discussion section to ensure confidentiality. All data will be stored in an encrypted file in the researcher's password-protected personal computer. The final report will not mention any participants' identifications.

The researcher and supervisor will be the only people who have access to the data. Once the study is completed, all data which might lead to an identification of the participants will obliterated.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in the study is voluntary, which means participants are free to choose whether or not to take part. The interview is guided by a list of questions. However, the participants have the right to pass over any questions that they do not feel comfortable answering.

The participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time up to the point of the completion of data analysis. Once data analysis is complete, the participants can no longer withdraw consent or ask for data destruction. According to the estimated completion date for data analysis, the last date to withdraw from the research will be May 15th, 2020. In the event of a withdrawal, all information the participant provides, including audio recording, will be destroyed and omitted from the final report.

The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

A summary of the research findings will be posted on the University of Windsor REB website.

Web address: <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries/>

Date when results are available: August 20th, 2020

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and in presentations.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: The Office of Research Ethics, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix B

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

Research Participant Name: _____

Title of the Project: Chinese Immigrant Parents, Their Children's Language Learning, and Parent-Child Relationships

I consent to the audio-recording of interview.

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the recording be stopped. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that recording will be kept confidential.

The audio recordings will be stored in an encrypted file in the researcher's password-protected personal computer. The destruction of the recordings will be completed after transcription and verification.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audio recordings will be for professional use only.

This research has been cleared by the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.

(Research Participant)

(Date)

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Part I: Background Questions

1. Could you please briefly introduce your education and working background?
2. Which part of China do you and your family come from? Besides Mandarin, do you speak any other dialects (e.g., Cantonese)? How about your spouse and your children?
3. How long has your family been living in Canada? How good is your English? Do you speak any other languages?
4. How many children do you have? Which schools do they go to? What grades are they in?
5. Did your children ever change schools?

Part II: Open-ended Questions

Parents' attitudes towards their children's language learning and language preference

1. Tell me something about the schools you chose for your children. Did you consider language as an influencing factor? Why?
2. Which language do you speak most often at home? Do you require your children to communicate with you in Chinese? How do your children like it?
3. What do you think of your children's Chinese proficiency level? How about his or her other languages?
4. How do your children feel about learning Chinese? What do you do if they do not like it?

Parental involvement in their children's language learning

5. Do you deliberately promote Chinese culture at home?
6. Do you send your children to any Chinese classes or other language programs outside of school? If yes, please elaborate.
7. What do you expect your children to achieve in language learning? Do you prefer your children to achieve proficiency in a specific language and why?
8. What are the challenges you experience with your children's language learning? Which one is the most significant? Tell me about the strategies you have used to address the challenges.

Parent-child relationships

9. In general, what do you think of your communication with your children?
10. What are your concerns regarding communication with your children? Do you think changing to another language would help?
11. Have you noticed any changes in your children's language preference throughout the years? What are your thoughts on their language practices and the quality of your communication?
12. Tell me something about your children's communication with their grandparents.
13. Are there any other ways in which children's language practices impact your lives that you want to discuss?

VITA AUCTORIS

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PLACE OF BIRTH: Jiangsu, China

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1985

EDUCATION: Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, B.
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2020